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123

Issue 123 | March 2016

Symbolic photo-manipulation

Carlos Quevedo discusses
the ideas behind his
illustrative photo-
manipulations

plus

Vibrant cartoon illustration

Light-filled speed painting

Using values in sci-fi art

Quickly create a fantasy scene

Surreal sketches

and much more!

Editor's Letter



ANNIE MOSS
Junior Editor









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Welcome to 2dartist issue 123!

In issue 123 you'll find interviews with cartoon and game artist Joachim Leclercq, photo-manipulation artist Carlos Quevedo and traditional painter Meredith Marsone. Take a look inside the moleskin sketchbook of illustrator Oscar Llorens and be inspired by the 10 new images in the gallery.

This month we also have Massimo Porcella's guide to speed painting a light filled scene, and an overview of how he created a magical forest. Thomas Stoop guides us through painting a sci-fi woodland and Sung Choi shows how he quickly creates a fantasy scene with perspective. Also in this issue you can see Ian Jun Wei Chiew's process for creating a desolate harbor and Juan Novelletto continues his series on sci-fi fundamentals with a tutorial on using FX!

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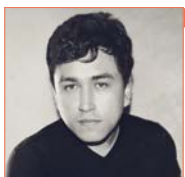
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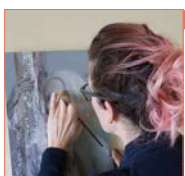
JOACHIM LECLERCQ

Joachim Leclercq is a graphic artist and illustrator from Belgium. He creates 2D work for a number of cartoons, videogames and print, and specializes in backgrounds and colorization.



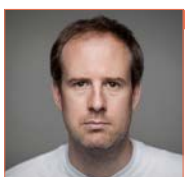
CARLOS QUEVEDO

Carlos Quevedo is a 22-year-old graphic artist with a degree in Graphic Design based in Valencia, Venezuela. He specializes in digital illustration and currently works as a freelance artist.



MEREDITH MARSONE

Meredith Marsone is a contemporary artist based in New Zealand. She works in oils creating works that center around figures as they move through the myriad of human experiences.



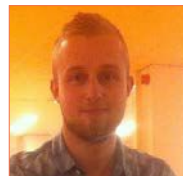
OSCAR LLORENS

Oscar Llorens is a freelance illustrator currently working from his studio in Madrid. As well as being a freelance illustrator, Oscar has also worked in a few advertising agencies in Spain.



MASSIMO PORCELLA

Massimo Porcella is a freelance concept artist and tutor currently living in Genova, Italy. His works include dramatic fantasy and sci-fi environments which are often on an epic scale.



THOMAS STOOP

Thomas Stoop is a recently graduated freelance artist based in the Netherlands. He has been working freelance while finishing his bachelor's degree, but he is now looking for in-house opportunities.



JUAN NOVELLETTO

Juan Novelletto is a senior concept artist at NGD Studios, developing the *Master of Orion* reboot, and art director at the indie games studio Nastycloud. He is based in Buenos Aires, Argentina.



SUNG CHOI

Sung Choi (Sunghun Choi) is an award-winning concept artist from South Korea currently working at Bungie in Washington. He specializes in world design and illustration for the entertainment industry.



IAN JUN WEI CHIEW

Ian Jun Wei Chiew is a concept artist working in the film and gaming industry. He currently resides in Redmond, Washington, and works for Sucker Punch Productions, but also works as a freelance artist too.



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We are always looking for tutorial artists, gallery submissions, potential interviewees, writers and more. For more information, please send a link to your work to: annie@3dtotal.com.

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Distribution
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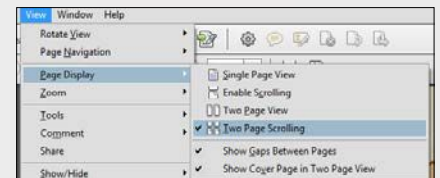
If you're having problems viewing the double-page spreads that we feature within this magazine, then follow this handy little guide on how to set up your PDF reader!

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Jump to articles

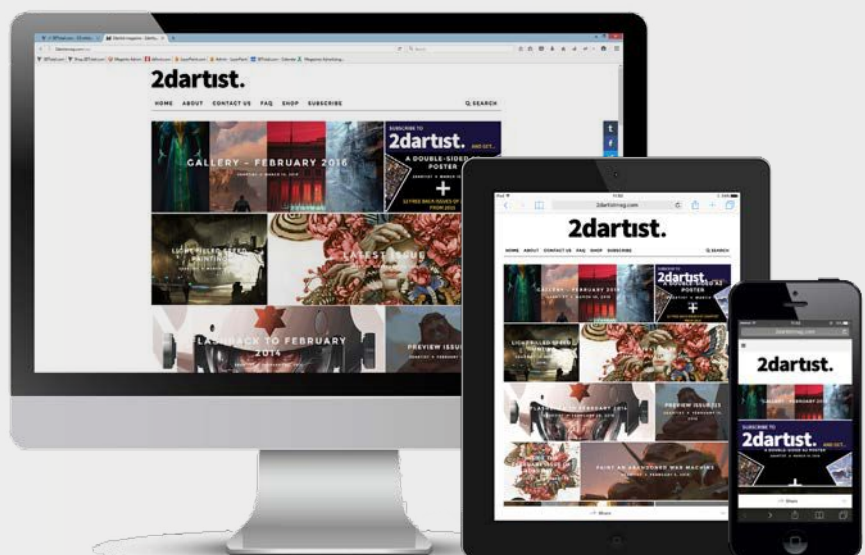
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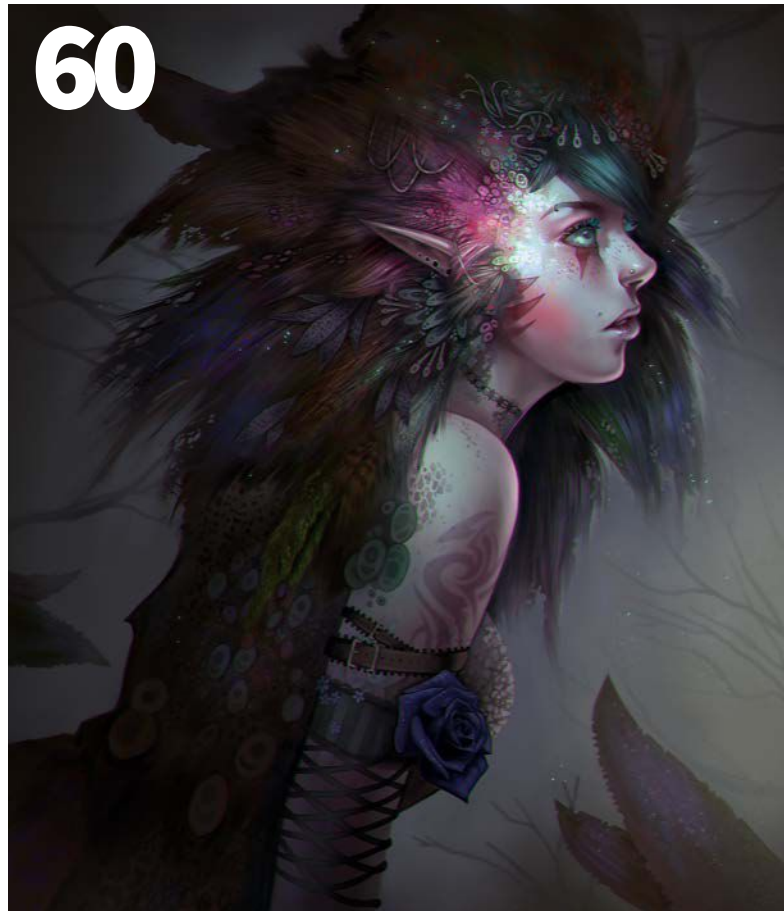
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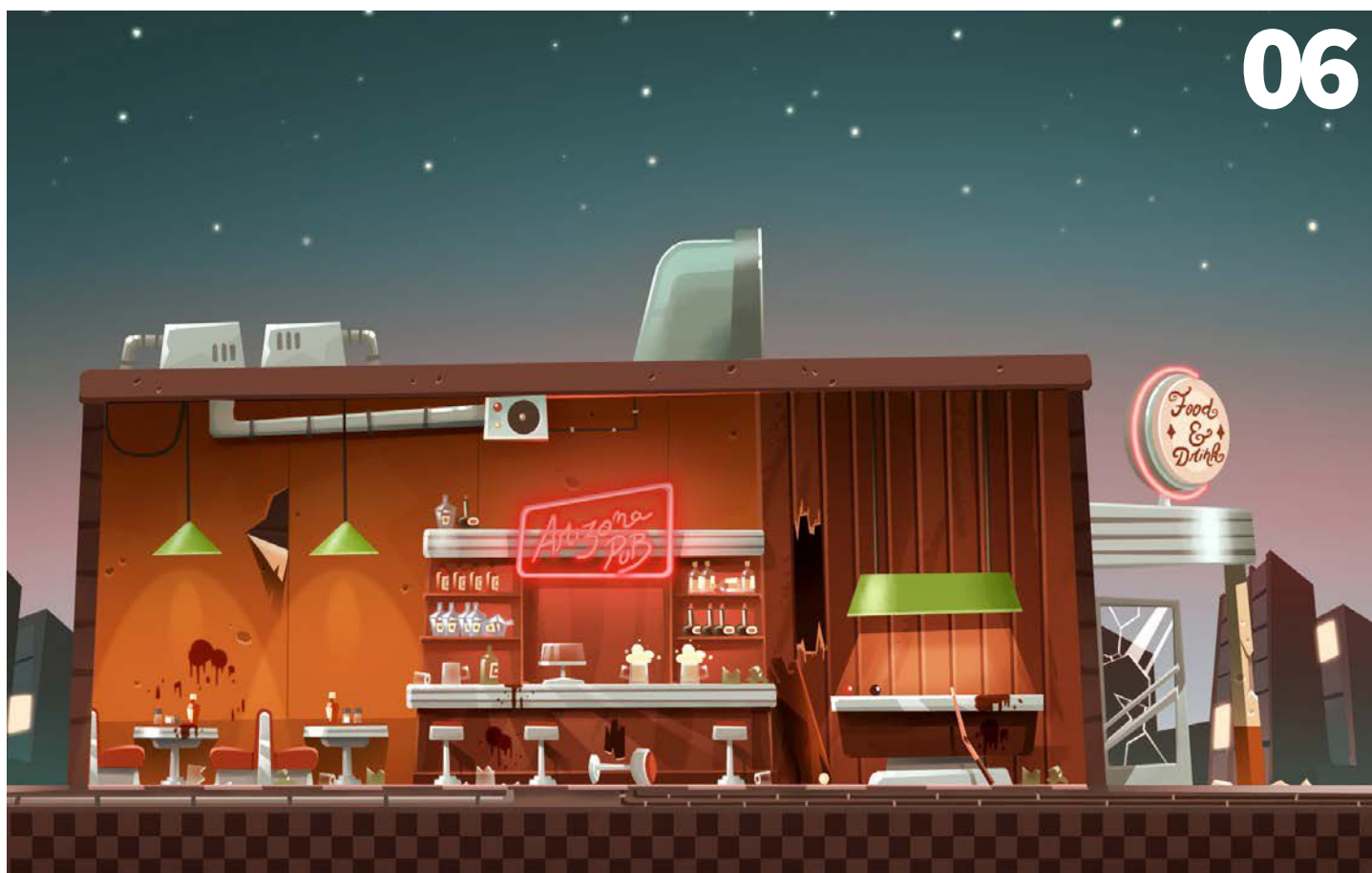


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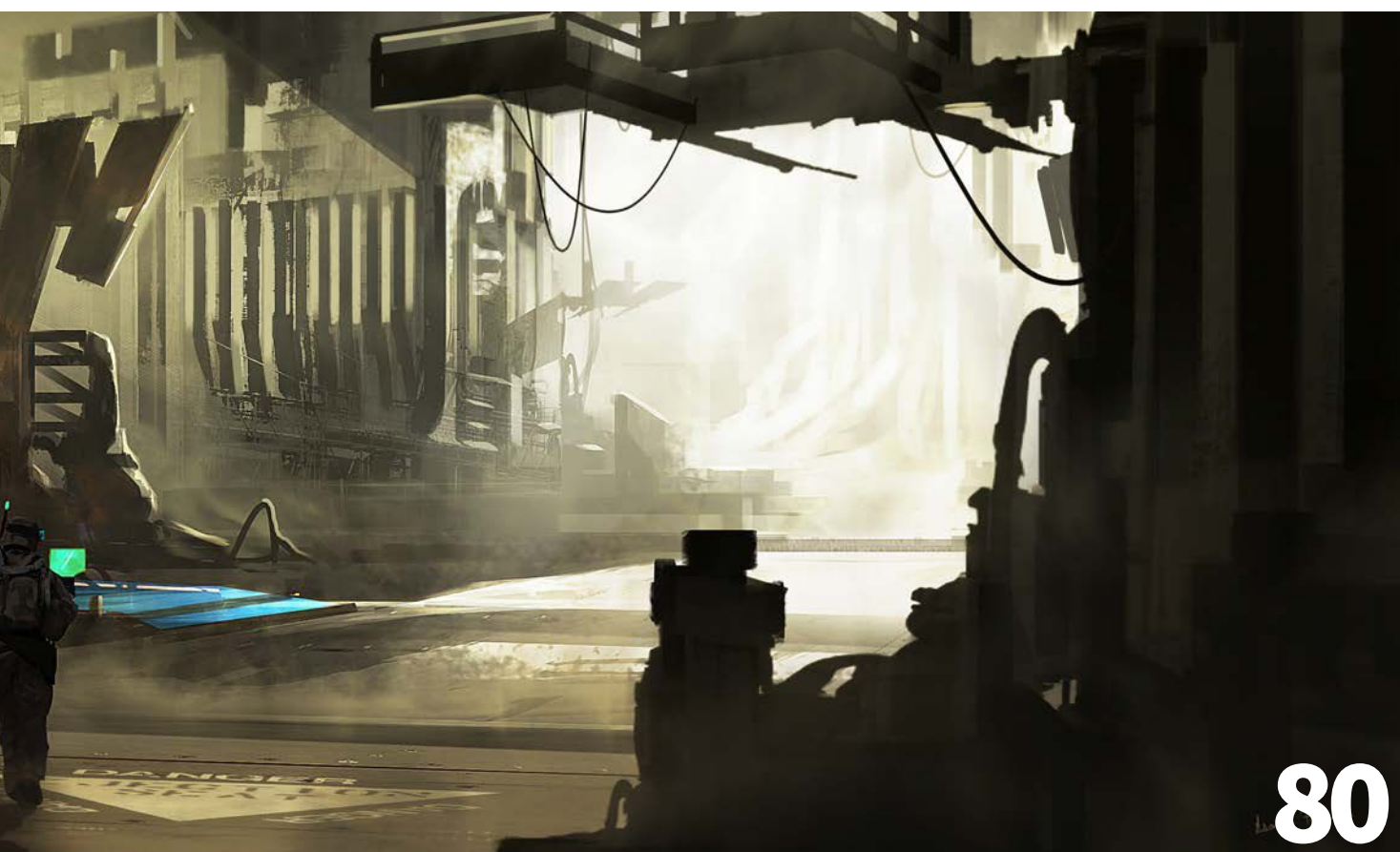
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Vibrant cartoon illustration

Joachim Leclercq, 2D artist at the French games studio Anakama, discusses his bright, cartoon influenced work for games, print and TV... ▶

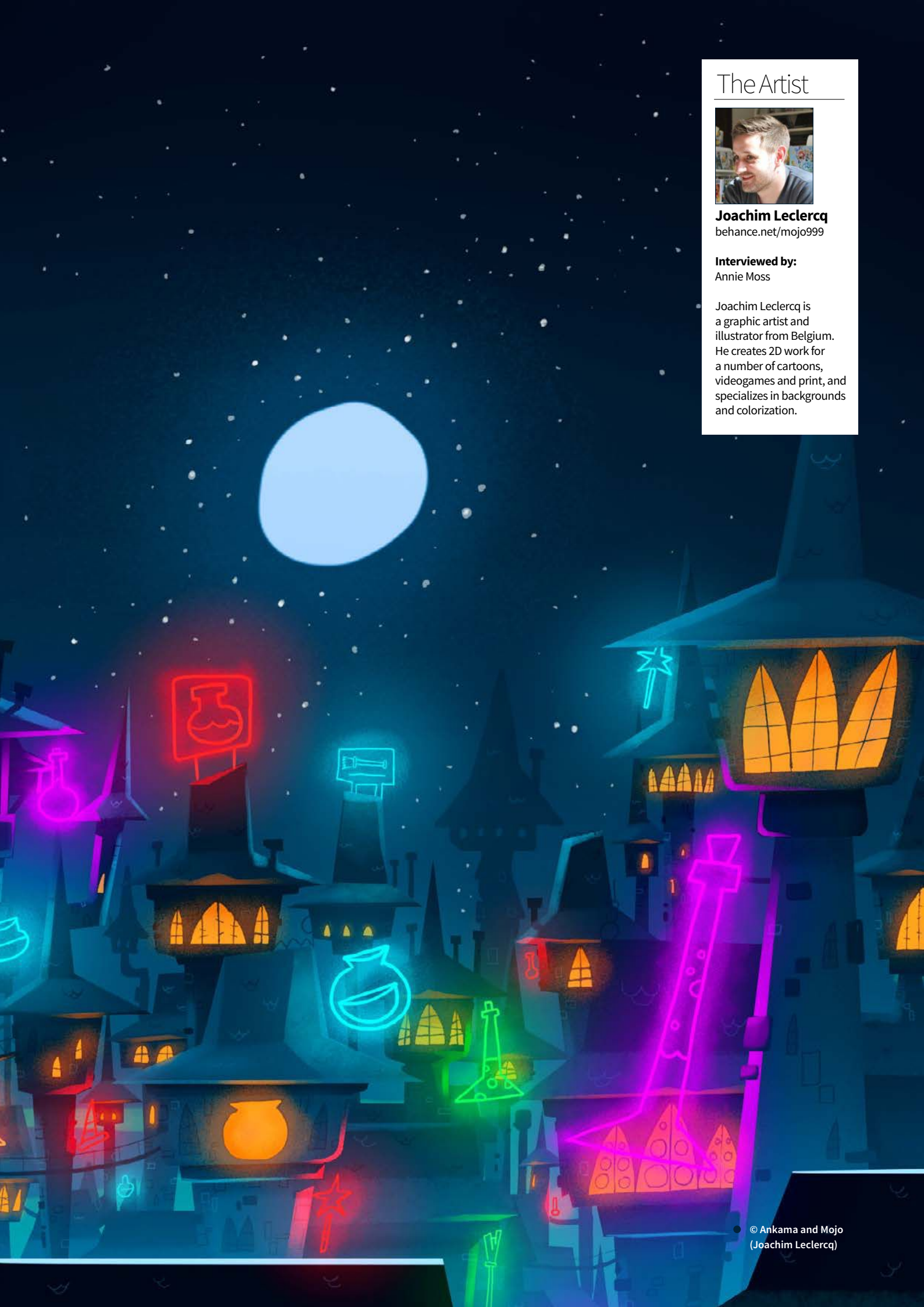
The Artist



Joachim Leclercq
[behance.net/mojo999](https://www.behance.net/mojo999)

Interviewed by:
Annie Moss

Joachim Leclercq is a graphic artist and illustrator from Belgium. He creates 2D work for a number of cartoons, videogames and print, and specializes in backgrounds and colorization.



Inspired by the TV cartoons of his childhood, such as the *Powerpuff Girls*, *Samurai Jack*, and *Dexter's Laboratory*, graphic artist and illustrator Joachim Leclercq has pursued his love of bright colors and creating atmospheres and decors. Working for the French games company Ankama, Joachim has worked on a variety of projects including the TV cartoon *Mini Wakfu*, the videogame *Abraca*, and the comic book *DoggyBags*, among other print editions. We caught up with Joachim to talk about his career so far, the artists he is inspired by and the significant moments of his career...

2dartist: Hi Joachim, thank you for talking to 2dartist! Can you kick things off by telling us a little bit about yourself and your work?

Joachim Leclercq: Hi, I'm Joachim Leclercq (my friends and colleagues call me Mojo) I live in Belgium, not far from Lille, a big city in the North of France. I'm 2D artist and I work for Ankama (again not far from Lille, in France).

I have had the opportunity to work in various different medias; print editions, animation, and recently for a videogame. I specialize mostly in background and colorization work. I'm a fan of videogames, animation, Genndy Tartakovsky, cinema, and roman history!

2da: Your works have a really bold style with bright colors – do you have any tips for readers who want to recreate this in their own work?

JL: Thanks! I always like looking for the right atmosphere and the right colors, it's the part of the job where I am the most comfortable, and also where I spend the most time.

I don't have any secret methods to succeed (sorry), I only do a lot of tests, often with the Hue/Saturation, and the Brightness/Contrast in Photoshop. As for my style, I'm pretty influenced by the cartoons I've seen during my childhood and my adolescence. Cartoons like the *Powerpuff Girls*, *Samurai Jack*, and *Dexter's Laboratory* and many others. I love those cartoons where everything is a bit distorted.

2da: What was it about digital art that made you want to pursue a career in the industry? ►

● Early research on a *Dofus* project © Ankama and Mojo (Joachim Leclercq)



- The complete background of page 6 of the second *Paloma*
© Mojo (Joachim Leclercq) and Vincent Deruyck











■ Early research for the *Abraca* game
© Ankama and Mojo (Joachim Leclercq)



JL: Like I said earlier, I really like creating atmospheres and decors. I like to tell stories and to imagine it, so the best way for me to enjoy my work was to be a 2D artist I think! If not I'm totally wrong.

2da: What are your preferred tools to work with generally? Are there any brushes you find yourself using repeatedly?

JL: My favorite tool is Photoshop, and I have a brush named Bristle that I often use to create illustrations that look a bit like they are handmade. I also like to draw with a thin black felt pen.

2da: Are there any tools, techniques or software you would like to explore in the future, and why?

JL: I have a friend and colleague, Xavier Houssin; he's an art director who uses PaintTool SAI, and I really like the way it looks when he uses this software. He's also very talented, which might help! I admit that it made me want to try a little, but when you're used to a software, it's never easy to try another. I also want to improve my illustration skills, and draw in pencil on paper much more often. But there is never enough time...

2da: Is there a particular artist or group of artists whose work you find particularly inspires your work?

JL: I really love the style and the work of Scott Wills. His work on materials, shapes and colors inspired me a lot especially in my early research for *Abraca*.

I was particularly inspired by his work on *Star Wars: Clone Wars* and *Samurai Jack*. Everything in his work is so balanced!

Regarding Arthur de Pins, it is his work on colors and vectors that impresses me. In *Péchés mignons*, and also in *Zombillenium*, everything is so perfect! And Kevin Dart, I love his work. He is perhaps the most inspiring artist for me, I like his 70s style.

2da: Where (and when) do you feel you are at your most creative?

JL: Ironically, I think it is at night when I go to sleep that inspiration comes more often, because I let my imagination go where she wants while waiting for ►

🕒 Artist Timeline Joachim's career so far

2007: Joachim began working at Ankama

2008: Created his first comic *Chaosland*, a strange cartoon

2008: Joachim's first Manga (Ankama editions, from the videogame *Dofus* MMORPG, with Vincent Deruyck)

2010: Joachim worked as a background designer for the cartoon *Mini Wakfu*

2011: Worked with Brooklyn United on advertising material for AT&T AdWorks

2013: Got his first Wacom Cintiq, which he finds incredibly helpful

2014: The release of *Paloma*, a comic book with Vincent Deruyck

2015: The twentieth volume of *Dofus* is released

2016: The release of *Abraca*, a videogame Joachim worked on as a concept artist

2016: Works for Label 619 on *DoggyBags*, a comic book

● The complete background page 8 of the second *Paloma*
© Mojo (Joachim Leclercq) and Vincent Deruyck



One complete page of *DoggyBags*
© Label 619, Mojo (Joachim Leclercq)
and Simon Hutt Troussellier



Is there a particularly memorable project or an artwork that was a real turning point for you creatively? Can you tell us a bit about why it was significant for you?

I think it was my work on *Mini Wakfu* (a cartoon based on the videogame), because it was the first time that I worked for an animation and for a big customer (France Télévisions). It was also the first time I worked with Flash, in another style than mine, and with Fabrice Nzinzi, a really talented guy. On this project I learned a lot, maybe more than on any other project, it was really a turning point in my work, and the reward was when I saw my work on TV for the first time. It was huge, so it was really significant for me!

- **Background for *Mini Wakfu***
© Ankama, Mojo (Joachim Leclercq),
Romain Pergod and Fabrice Nzinzi



sleep to come. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. Outside of this, I don't have specific places or moments, it just depends!

2da: What makes a project fun for you?

JL: I love when there are things I have not tested yet (in the style for example), although this also scares me a little too it is very stimulating and fun. After that, it is the people with whom I work; this contributes greatly to the overall atmosphere.

Finally there is the project itself, I know that right now, the most exciting for me are the videogame projects, even if they are very long projects in general. Comic book projects are usually fun too, because those are the projects where I'm the most free. I can usually use the style I want, and tell the stories I want too.

2da: What has been the project you have most enjoyed working on?

JL: I think this is the story of *DoggyBags*; a comic book being released in April 2016, published by Label 619. "Run" Guillaume Renard, lead editor of

What do you think has been most influential to your career success?

I think there are the various meetings that have marked my career. From the Academy of Fine Arts, Tournai in Belgium where I have studied, to Ankama where I work now, I have met a lot of people (such as graphic designers, illustrators, animators, writer and others) who have influenced me. They open my mind and make me discover many things. I really think in retrospect that it has been these meetings and what they have brought to me, that have been the most decisive and influential things in making me who I am.

Label 619, is someone I respect a lot and who is very talented, and his label is really prestigious. So I was really happy and proud to participate in the project and draw for his label – it means a lot to me. It is like an achievement to me, it's the kind of thing where I can say later "Yes I did this!" In addition, I was able to work with a very talented friend, Simon Troussellier, which was great and I learned a lot about storytelling and drawing.

2da: What initial steps do you take when you are first given a brief for a new project?

JL: It really depends on the project; sometimes the idea comes automatically and quickly enough, so I'm

able to set myself directly to drawing and sketches. But sometimes it's the opposite and I have to think more about it, and there I have to reflect more on the subject.

2da: What do you find most challenging about working freelance?

JL: I think the hardest thing is to manage your own time and ensure that you always have something planned after the next project is completed, because, well, you have to eat! For my part I am lucky because I work in more of a freelance way, which allows me to be less stressed with the cash flow and the schedule, while making quite diverse and varied works that ►



“I think that the more difficult the work is, the more I will be able to learn something new.

avoid locking myself into a humdrum – and that is really appreciated.

2da: How do you keep yourself motivated when working on a difficult project?

JL: I often take it as a challenge, and I think that the more difficult the work is, the more I will be able to learn something new. It is not always easy and often the most difficult thing is to engage in the work, to have enough self-confidence (but not too much) and not too much doubt. On the other hand, it's always pleasant to see your customer happy when the job is done, and to know that you have done well! So that helps a lot too.

2da: When you're not working hard on your art, what do you like to do with your time?

JL: I have several passions, overall they are pretty standard: I love the cinema, Coen brothers, Quentin Tarantino, Wong Kar-wai, Wes Anderson, J.J. Abrams and many others! I watch a lot of TV series too such

If you could write a letter to your younger self, just starting out, what advice would you give?

The first advice might be to lose less time and work more, because according to me, that is the key to moving forward and progressing. And maybe my younger self had a tendency to play too many videogames sometimes, like many adolescents I suppose... but I have the impression that I wasted too much time.

The second piece of advice would be to tell him to be daring and go forward more, take more risks, because it often pays off. I was a little too shy and not confident enough.

as *Fargo*, *Game of Thrones*, *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*, and *Boardwalk Empire*. I'm quite a fan of HBO and a Netflix addict!

I read a lot of things too, from novels to comics (Jaworski, Hobb, Martin, and Trondheim and so on) and I read many things about the Roman empire too (mostly late antiquity). And finally, I play videogames, mainly on consoles. The last things I really loved were *Life is Strange* and *The Last of Us*.

2da: Finally, where will we be able to see your work next? Are there any projects we should look out for?

JL: This year, my work will normally be visible in *Abaca* (Ankama videogames on Steam release) in

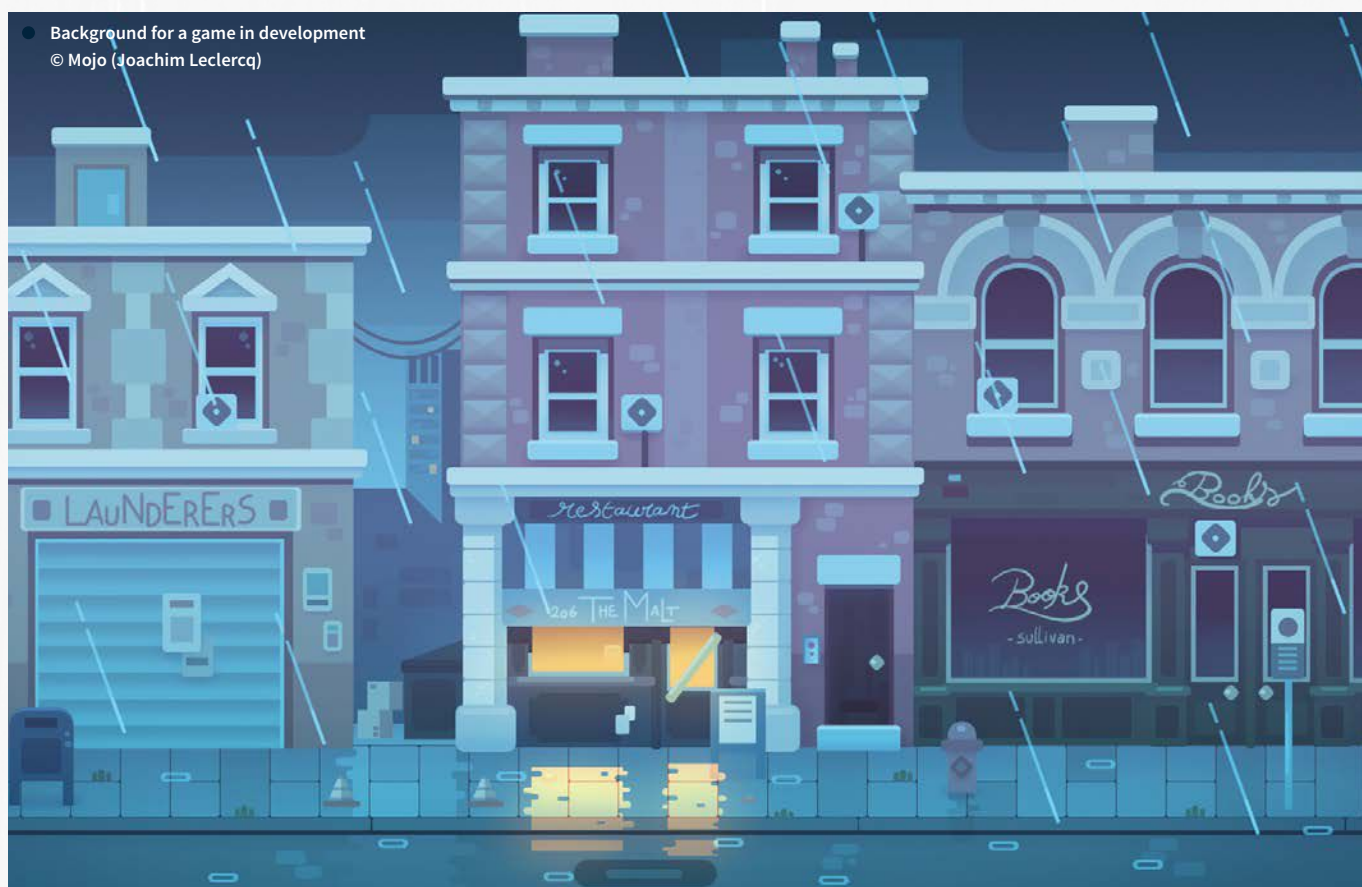
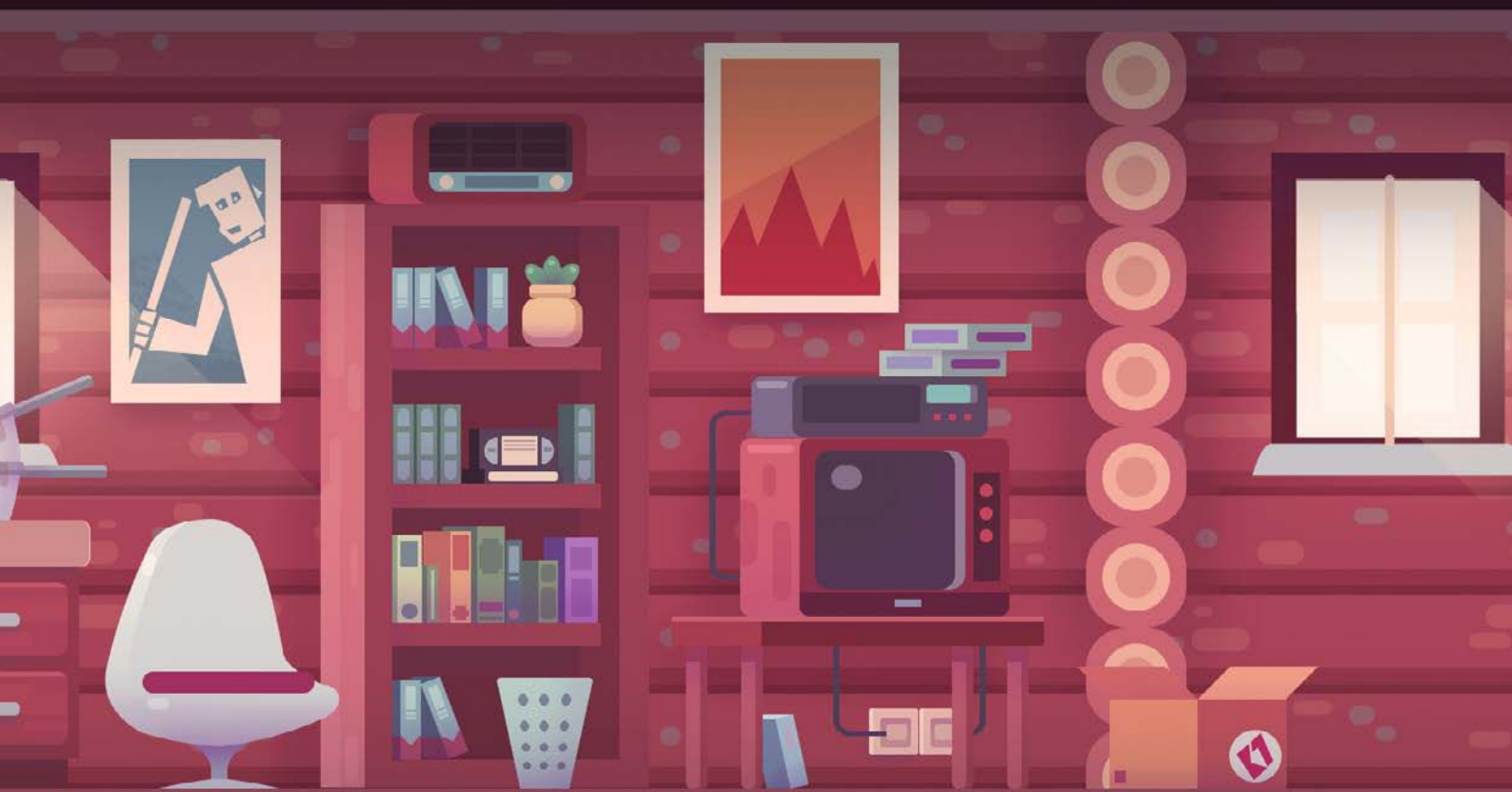
DoggyBags issue 10 (released in France in April) and in Volume 2 of *Paloma* (released around December). Maybe there will be other surprises, but nothing I'm sure of yet! ●

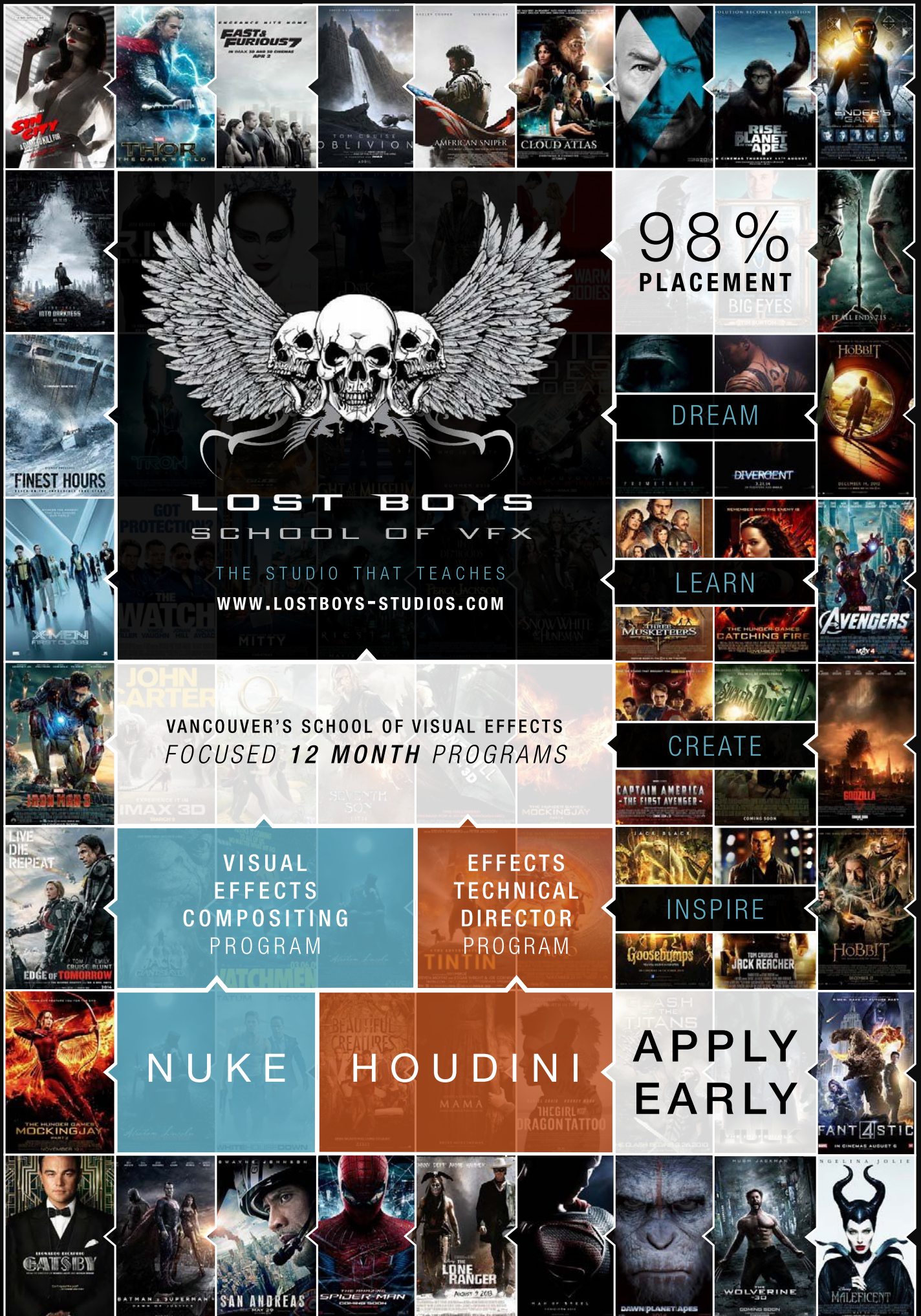
Thank you Joachim for chatting to 2dartist!

The Artist



Joachim Leclercq
behance.net/mojo999





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The Artist



Carlos Quevedo
carlosquevedoart.com

Interviewed by:
Annie Moss

Carlos Quevedo is a 22-year-old graphic artist with a degree on Graphic Design based in Valencia, Venezuela. He specializes in digital illustration and currently works as a freelance artist.

Symbolic photo-manipulation

Discover the deeper themes behind the illustrative work of up-and-coming freelance artist Carlos Quevedo... ▶





Since he was a child Carlos Quevedo has loved to create art, spending much of his time drawing in notebooks at school, forming abstract concepts, and recreating characters from the TV shows he enjoyed. Since studying Graphic Design at college, Carlos has worked in advertising and also as a freelance artist creating works in Photoshop using photo-manipulation techniques.

Carlos is greatly influenced by the themes and symbols of the religious teaching he grew up with, and now adapts these to explore his personal interpretations. This month he talks to 2dartist about the difficulties of pursuing a creative career in Venezuela, the ideas behind his work, and the best tools for creating awesome photo-manipulations....

2dartist: Hi Carlos, thank you for talking to 2dartist! Could you kick things off by introducing yourself a bit to readers who may not be familiar with you and your work?

Carlos Quevedo: Hi, thanks for the invitation. I'm a graphic designer and illustrator. I graduated from college with a degree in this field, and I'm based in Valencia, Venezuela. I'm an emerging artist just at the beginning of my career.

On this point I can add that studying graphic design wasn't particularly easy because I had low support from my family at the beginning. But I can't blame them, the career was quite new in my country then, and it was not considered sustainable. Sadly, creative careers are underestimated here. Anyhow I decided

to step up on what I really wanted to do and it was the best decision I could have made. No regrets.

Talking about the technical aspects of my work, my main focus is digital illustration, specifically photo-manipulation or photo-illustration and mixed media. My work brings together several techniques such as photography, painting (digital airbrushing) and even some 3D elements which I work on in Photoshop to make a composition.

Through a complex process of assembling and blending I get to fuse all those elements (photos, textures and 3D) into a single image or product.

2da: Where do you draw your inspiration from? What influences your work and motivates you? ►

● A piece from the *Divine Transmutation* series, 2016





● A prayer for purification and forgiveness. Made in 2014, Carlos has many concepts like this. Model: Jessica Truscott

- *Forsaken* has a special meaning for Carlos because it was one of those unfinished pieces he left behind, forgotten among hundreds of files. One day he met it again and decided to finish it





CQ: When I made my first attempt at digital art, I featured themes like mythology mostly, dark tales and nature. However I changed my perspective and my style gradually moved, and was inspired by my own background in theology. Half of my life I belonged to a religious group and despite the fact that I quit several years ago, the knowledge, lessons and values remain in my head. So I started using this as my main source of inspiration, bringing these ideas with a twist. I adapted them to my vision and interpretation, representing them in an oneiric and surreal way.

The need to understand more of this world and its purpose through my studies on theology keeps me motivated to tell more about it on the canvas. Artistic movements such as Renaissance and Baroque art have influenced my work too.

“The need to understand more of this world and its purpose through my studies on theology keeps me motivated to tell more about it on the canvas”

2da: Which artists do you admire and how did they influence your work?

CQ: In 2009 I read the magazine *Arte y Diseño por ordenador* (a Spanish magazine like *Advanced Photoshop*) for the first time. There I found out about the workflow and life of a digital artist. I could say that this reading put me in the right direction to pursue my goals. In the magazine I read about Alexander Jansson, a very well-known illustrator in this field, I just fell in love with his work. Actually my

first pieces were totally inspired by his style, featuring nature and dark environments, his work motivated me a lot.

For traditional art, Armando Barrios is one of my favorites. I also made some digital pieces years ago inspired by Cubism, which is his main style.

2da: Your work often features elements such as planets, daggers, fire and clouds; what significance is there to these symbols in your work?

CQ: Certainly these elements have a symbolic and sacred meaning in my work, and sometimes they are just literal. For instance the sword is part of the armor of God, “the sword of the Spirit” which represents the word of God (the Bible) as cited in Ephesians 6:17. Part of this armor is the shield as well, and this

Carlos made this piece in 2014. It's a dark tale about two souls living in the same body, feeding from each other



🕒 Artist Timeline Carlos's career so far

2009: Carlos discovers digital art through *Arte y Diseño por ordenador* magazine

2011: Graduated from Monseñor de Talavera College in Graphic Design

2012: Worked for Publish Fast advertising agency (Valencia) as a head designer

2012: First attempts at digital art using Photoshop

2013: Getting inspiration from DeviantArt and Behance websites

2013: First posts on online art communities getting good responses

2013: Carlos quit his job to work as a freelance artist

2014: First book cover design for *Plenilune*

2014: Featured on a great amount of websites and in online magazines

2015: Featured in *Advanced Photoshop* and *Photoshop Creative* magazines



Another piece for the *Inner Self Portraits* series, playing with the theme of bringing a literal vision or interpretation

represents the faith. I like to play with these elements, making a personal version or interpretation. I use fire because it's a symbol of purification and even destruction; planets and clouds to give an ethereal and spiritual sense to my pieces, alluding to heaven and the reign of God over all the universe.

2da: You studied graphic design and publicity at college, how have you incorporated the skills you learned there into your freelance career?

CQ: Graphic design is a career that involves a focus on advertising and a focus on art too, it

is predominantly about the first one but all the knowledge and skills you learn can be used easily in digital art, actually I could say that they are required. I know many talented self-taught artists but some background or study about the profession is always a good thing, especially for composition. Of course the skills I learned during my career are essential when, for instance, I use Photoshop and other programs like Illustrator; it makes your work easier. However, there wasn't such thing as a photo illustration class in my college, and so I had to start like everybody else, trying out Photoshop, using my previous knowledge and intuition to get the results I wanted.

I like to experiment in Photoshop a lot, combine filters, textures, and blending modes just to see what happens. When the experiment is successful, you add that process to your main "box of work tools."

2da: You also have a background in advertising, how has this affected how you develop your artistic style?

CQ: I could say that I make two types of art; the one I make for me to fill my personal needs and express my ideas and feelings, and the other one is commercial to sell my work and get clients. This point is interesting because graphic design is a ►

“I spent a lot of time drawing stuff in my notebooks at school, abstract concepts, and characters from the TV shows I liked then”

profession for advertising, to sell a product, and that's what I make when it is about clients.

For instance, when it's a book cover illustration, the graphic designer has to understand that he is not working to please the client (this would be a secondary factor). He is working to please and get the attention of the consumers, that's primordial to sell the product, in this case a book. So the artwork must be eye-candy, attractive or aggressive if it needs it; you are working for a target to make consumers buy the product through its physical aspect, even if the content is not good at all. But that's what advertising does; it elevates the expectations of something. The influence of advertising on my artistic style has been a positive thing instead of negative. It helps me to understand the needs of my clients and to sell my art.

2da: Your digital style is quite reminiscent of traditional oil painting. How have you developed this look?

CQ: That's always a matter of good blending in Photoshop, and having good habits when working makes a great difference. For example it is very important to work with high resolution images with good light. I get that look using blending layers and desaturated tones at first, and some textures to join all the elements even if they don't belong to the same photo. And finally I use an airbrushing tool in Photoshop to highlight some details and give it that aspect; many objects are painted.

2da: What are your preferred tools to work with generally, and why?

AA: My main tool would be Photoshop, talking about programs; it is simply the best to manipulate photographs and that's what it was created for. I use a digital Nikon Camera too, which is essential for taking pictures and my favorite tool would be the Wacom tablet. I think the tablet is really necessary to make this kind of work, for those little details you can't reach with the mouse. The pressure technology makes it really comfortable to paint, to draw fine lines such as hair.

2da: What was it about digital art that made you want to pursue a career in the industry?

AA: I guess that digital art was not in my plans at all. Since I was a kid I loved art, to draw, actually I'm pretty good at traditional art too, at least coloring

Carlos's significant artwork

This photo-manipulation was one of my first. I remember being so excited with the results. The process was very natural and fluent because I did not have any concept or idea about what I wanted to do, I just had a bunch of photos I got from DeviantArt's stock and resources section, and an empty canvas in Photoshop. Once I started playing with the blending modes and I had settled the model, everything begun to work out. At the beginning I thought I was going to do a mermaid, but normally in my creative process new ideas always come up, this was one of those cases, and it changed for good into this dark princess. I made a series from this idea, it was a significant improvement compared to my previous attempts at digital art.



on paper. I spent a lot of time drawing stuff in my notebooks at school, abstract concepts, and characters from the TV shows I liked then. I was pretty clear that I wanted to study some sort of creative career in college; that I wanted to be in the industry of visual communication.

Digital art was one of those things I discovered once I had started to study in the field. When I tried it for the first time I felt really comfortable and excited with the results I got. So I kept myself going in this way, finding new stuff and discovering a whole world of this kind of art was already established. This type of work has

become incredibly prominent in the last decade and even more so now that almost everyone has access to a computer or device to see millions of images every day. The market is growing quickly with new technologies, and every time there are more people who buy prints online to decorate their home. In fact I've sold a lot of prints of my pieces online too.

2da: What would your typical working day be like?

AA: Early in the morning I start replying to all the messages, notes and emails I have of people asking for my product. I spend the rest of the morning ►

- Part of the *Aurora's Song* series. In this series of images Carlos was looking for an "almost realistic look"



When Carlos posted this image he cited Colossians 1:14 from the Bible. It explains exactly what this work is about
© Carlos Quevedo and Max Solve







● A conceptual version of the Garden of Eden. Carlos used the most meaningful elements such as the woman, snake and the fruit

working on the current project or commission I have that day. Sometimes I have to get out to shoot some photos for a project. Normally I do that at the beginning to get all I need before I start the composition in Photoshop, and sometimes it gets difficult when you manage several commissions and personal illustrations at the same time. In these cases I try to divide the day between both projects.

2da: Do you have any tricks or tips to keep yourself motivated on a difficult project?

CQ: Sometimes spending a lot of time in front of the computer in the same room can become tedious and stressful, affecting your creative process, so when a project is very difficult I get out to take a walk. Doing some exercise, spending time with my friends and driving in the city works very well for me to keep myself relaxed. Reading a good book always brings the inspiration back as well.

2da: Are there any areas in the digital art world that you'd like to branch into (and why)?

CQ: Right now I'm focused on 2D but if I have the chance I'd like to learn more of 3D and 3D animation. I use some programs like Poser and DAZ 3D Studio to render some pieces or to get light references for my illustrations, but knowing about all its functions is still something to explore; an unknown place for

⚡ PRO TIP

Define your own style

The importance of defining a personal style is not a secret in digital art. Normally when a client hires me the first thing he tells me is that my style fits perfectly for the project they have. Clients hire me for my style of art and the themes I express, they want a piece of me on their project, which is really comfortable. Defining a personal style is not easy, there are hundreds of artists out there and sometimes our work can be affected or influenced by another artist's style. On this point we must have a very clear idea about the limit between what is considered as a copy and what is considered as inspiration. We can be inspired by another artist, but we have to combine that inspiration with our own ideas and feelings. When you develop a personal style, your artwork can be recognized quickly, because all your pieces share certain elements, themes, or styles of composition that make them yours.

me. I'm particularly amazed by the realistic model figures they are developing, they feel almost human, like a photo.

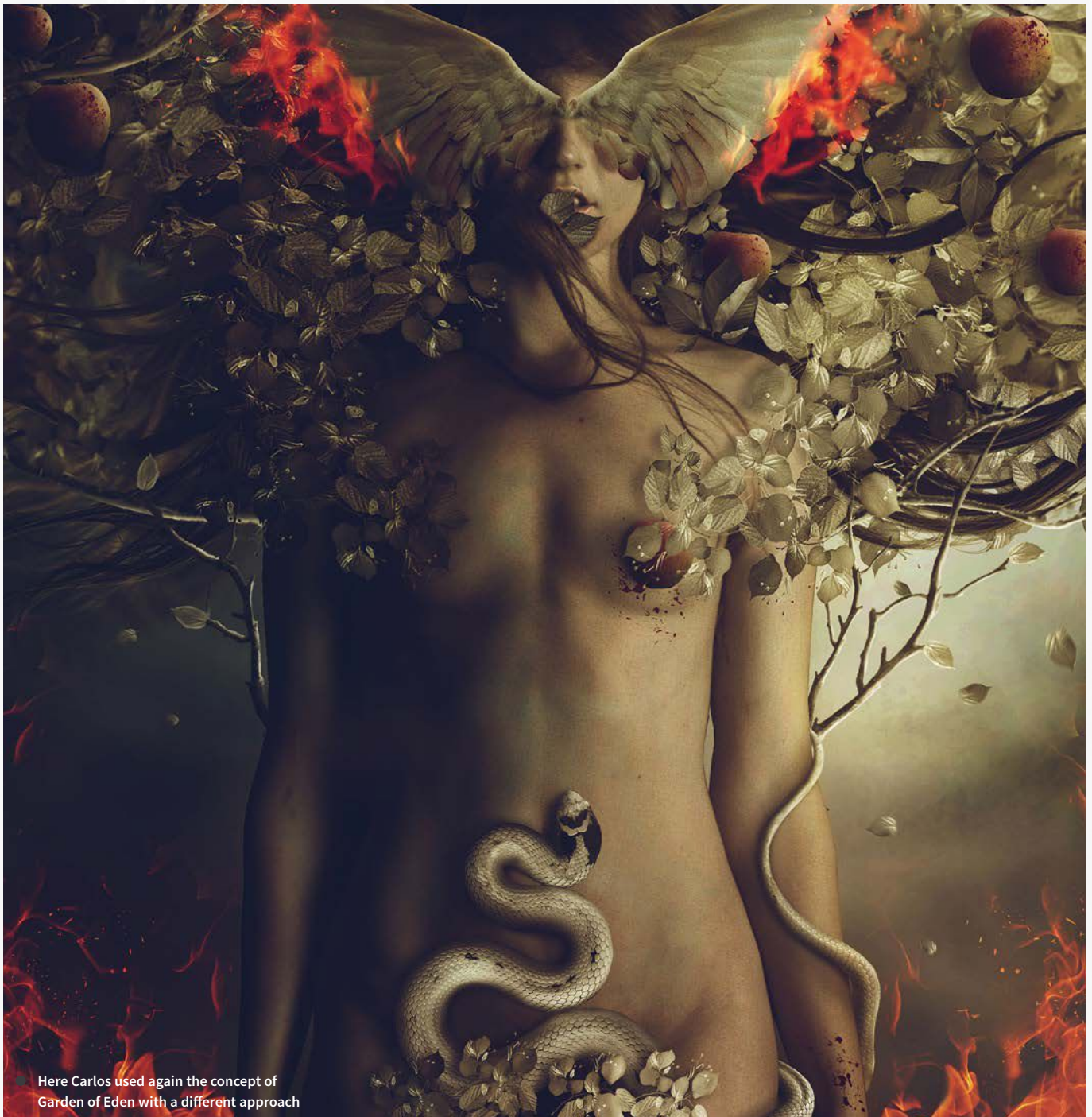
2da: What has been your favorite commission/project to work on so far and why?

CQ: It would be *Era II Medieval Legends*. It was an Illustration I made for Eduardo Tarilonte, a very well-known composer and maker of sample libraries (the programs used to create the soundtracks and music for film and TV industry). He has got great reviews from amazing composers who use his products, such as James Newton Howard. When Eduardo contacted

me I automatically accepted the project because I loved his vision and the style he was looking for was my comfort zone, besides he gave me a free pass to develop the cover without restrictions or limitations by his own tastes. These kinds of projects always are the best because you can put a lot of yourself in them, getting the best result.

2da: And finally, what can you tell us about your future projects?

CQ: For many people here in my country, the concept of being a graphic designer is treated just as a person who knows how to use a computer,



Here Carlos used again the concept of Garden of Eden with a different approach

and it is mostly a poorly paid job. People here don't understand the hard work behind it, and this is added to the current economic crisis we have.

So that's why I'm planning to give some workshops this year in my city. I'd like to encourage digital art as a sustainable and rewarding career in my country. Sadly I've only found just a few fellow artists who work in this area, so it's important for the aspiring designers to get this knowledge, to see beyond the barriers. They have to know all the opportunities we have in this market nowadays. ●

Thank you Carlos for chatting to 2dartist!

What do you think has been most influential to your career success?

I think it's the support of family and friends. Sometimes at the beginning of your path you can doubt yourself, sometimes you can think you're not good enough to make something, so the support of your friends and relatives can help you out with an objective opinion or suggestion.

On the other hand, being consistent and disciplined in my work is important. I hate to make pieces just to post them somewhere or to get exposure, of course we need the exposure, but we have to get it with hard work. I really don't like to make poor artworks and say that it was a quick work because I had "little free time." When I work on an illustration I take the time it needs to be done, even if it takes me weeks.

This does not mean that you will have a perfect work or a masterpiece as a result for your hard work, but the satisfaction of knowing that you did your best is a great reward. This is the defining point of success for any artist.

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Meredith Marsone
meredithmarsone.com

Meredith Marsone is a contemporary artist based in New Zealand. She works in oils creating works that center around figures as they move through the myriad of human experiences.

A R T I S T S P O T L I G H T

Interpretative oil painting

Meredith Marsone showcases her contemporary figure painting intended to reflect and contribute to the human experience... ▶

Having become disillusioned by the focus on conceptual art at her art school, and feeling that her passion for figurative oil painting made her work irrelevant, Meredith Marsone abandoned painting for seven years. Finally gaining the courage to return to art, she began to explore the figurative oil painting that she had felt disconnected her from the contemporary art scene. It is from this point that Meredith began to develop her distinctive and expressive style.

Meredith now creates her works by carefully studying models and painstakingly painting onto boards, then adding abstract aspects with the bold and risky use of a palette knife. The effect is a body of work which not only represents human experiences but leaves an element of ambiguity. As a result, the viewer is left with room to interpret the tone and expression of each piece in their own way, which relates Meredith's work to their own personal experiences.

This month Meredith showcases a selection of her favorite works. She talks to 2dartist about exploring human relation through art, what she loves so much about working with oil paint, and her unforgettable experience searching for an original Klimt painting...

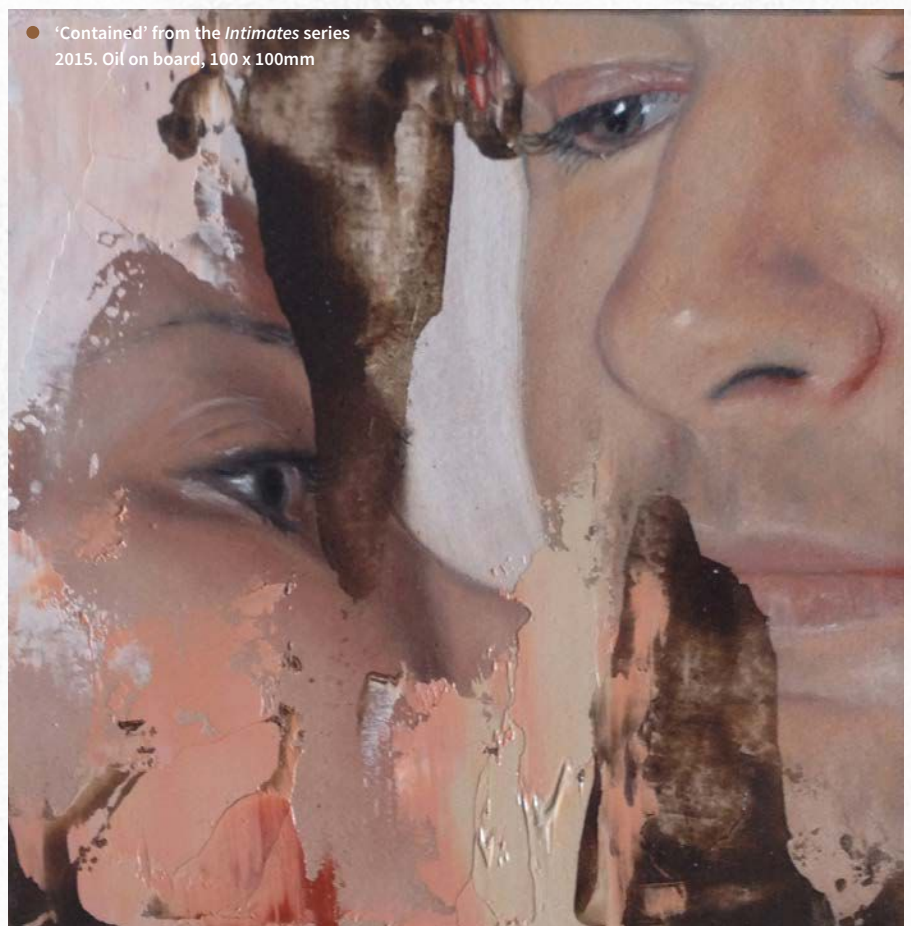
2dartist: Hello Meredith! Thanks for talking to 2dartist. First off, could you introduce yourself with a bit about your background and projects?

Meredith Marsone: Hi and thanks for having me here! I've been drawing and painting since I was old enough to hold a crayon. Naturally, I went to art school, but I studied at a time when conceptual art was the focus, and so I left with my bachelor's degree in hand but somewhat disillusioned, and with a feeling of irrelevance in my heart.

I wanted to be a figurative oil painter but I just didn't fit the contemporary art scene. I didn't paint for seven years, until finally, one day, I got brave enough or bored enough – I'm not sure which – to just start again.

"I want my work to contribute to the human experience not just reflect it"

I started painting people, the thing I loved most. Several years later in 2009 I quit my day job and haven't looked back. During that time I've had numerous exhibitions with galleries throughout NZ, Australia and the US. Painting is central to my life and well being. ►



● 'Everpresent' from the *Love/loss* series, 2016. Oil on board, 400 x 300mm





2da: Your works are mainly concerned with the human experience, what do you find so fascinating about this theme?

MM: My answer probably lies somewhere within the old adage 'art imitates life', but I want my work to contribute to the human experience not just reflect it. I want my audience to feel included and

understood, like their experience of life and love matters and is shared by others.

There are countless subtleties within this theme that keep me interested in it too. The way people relate to each other, how we love and hurt our significant other and also how we learn to forgive, be compassionate and share ourselves from

the best of who we are. I think my work might actually be about growing up! Growing up within a relationship.

2da: The style of your portraiture is very reminiscent of the traditional art masters. How have you developed and adapted this style for your own work?

MM: I think it may have happened too organically for me to be able to say! I haven't studied traditional techniques per se, but I have spent hours examining my favorite artists' work, trying to see through the layers of paint and trying to see the artist's hand at work. I think there's something magical about this.

I've noticed when I've had the few opportunities to travel overseas and see a lot of great art, when I return to my own work it's like I've learned by osmosis. My work will make an evolutionary leap without any formal input from me! Travel really excites me for this reason and I hope to get back to Europe soon.

2da: You often like to place your figures in chaotic environments, can you tell us about the ideas behind this?

MM: I think the abstract element of my work can be read as chaotic but it can also be left wide open to be interpreted by the viewer. I want the viewer to see in those marks and paint the meaning they need to find. I'll give tender clues in the figure or figures as to which direction they should head but it's important to me that the viewer finds their own way.

● 'The Shadows You Leave Behind- Her Story' (dyptich), 2015. Oil on board, 600mm tondo



● 'The Shadows You Leave Behind- His Story' (dyptich), 2015. Oil on board, 600mm tondo



2da: What are your favorite materials and tools to use, and why?

MM: Oil paint! And I've been really enjoying working on board the past few months. It gives you the ability to create so much detail. Oil paint has such wonderfully rich qualities and I love learning more about manipulating this challenging medium. I also have a couple of trusty palette knives that get used for the gestural work to give a varied texture to the paint.

2da: Which materials, styles or techniques would you like to explore in the future?

MM: I'd really like to give gouache a go! I love the clear flat planes that can be achieved with this type of paint.

2da: Where do you generally find inspiration for your pieces?

MM: Several places come to mind. Firstly, my muse; my partner. We talk about the content and meaning behind my work. He's a psychologist so I can get a perspective on human relations that I would otherwise not understand. It helps mold the direction of my work. ►

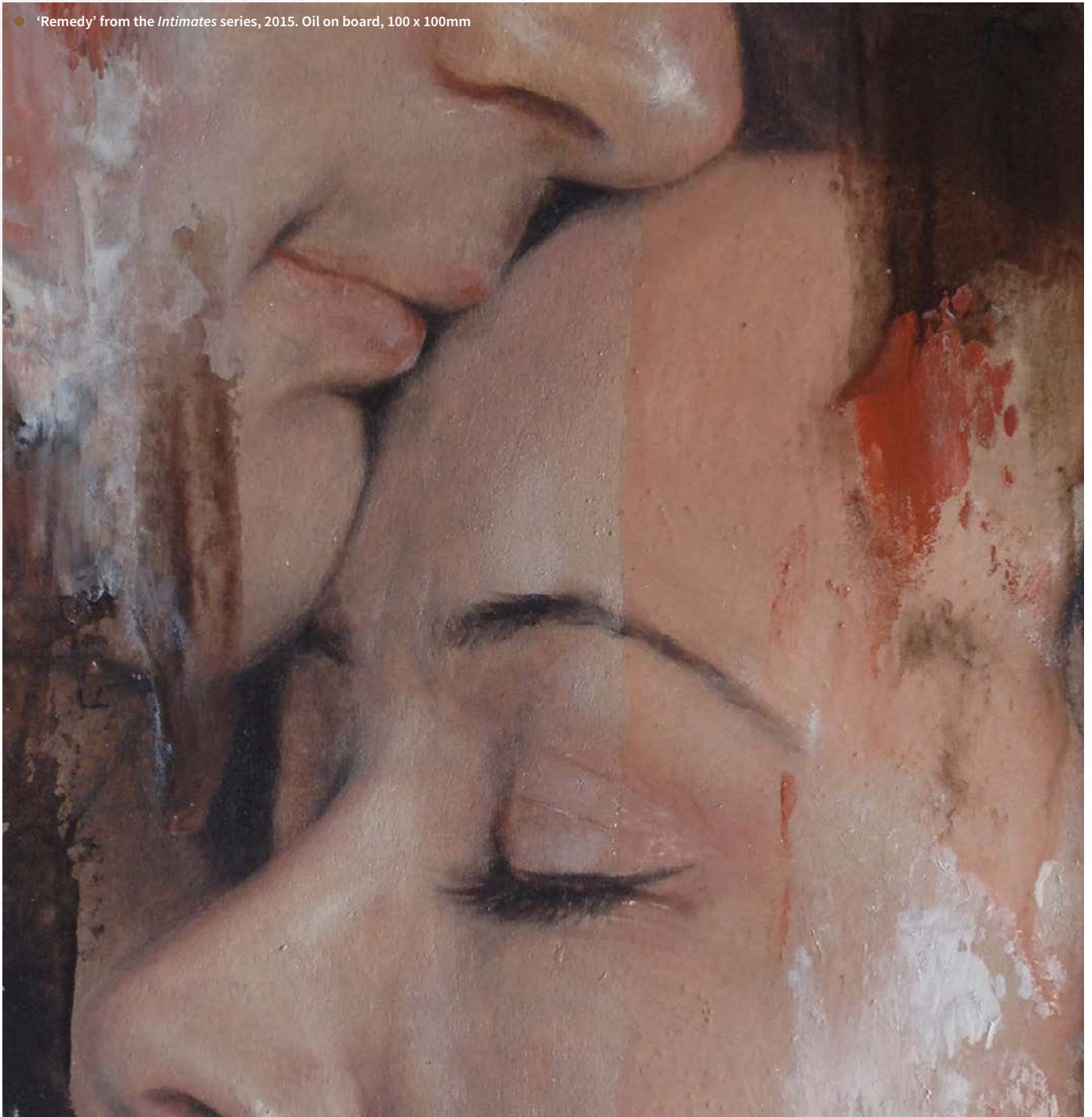
⚡ MEREDITH'S BREAKTHROUGH

This painting was the first time I integrated an abstract element into my work. This technique was actually born out of frustration. I'd been working on a painting for hours but had to finally concede it wasn't working. I picked up my palette knife which I had only used for mixing color at that point, and smeared paint over what I had deemed to be a failure of a painting. To my astonishment the painting transformed. A few hours of playing, balancing and mark-making later 'Shiver' was completed. Now, this technique is more refined and purposeful but still a risky and therefore a scary method of paint application.

● 'Shiver', 2015. Oil on canvas, 900 x 700mm



● 'Remedy' from the *Intimates* series, 2015. Oil on board, 100 x 100mm



From a visual perspective I'm inspired by so many things. I notice people; their faces, skin, a jaw-line, or shadow color in the crease of an eyelid. It subtly steers the direction of the aesthetics of my work. For example, I found a wonderful model who has very pale features and so my entire palette has been altered.

2da: Which other artists do you reference or look to for inspiration?

MM: I have hundreds of artists I follow on Instagram that keep me motivated to be the best I can be. Sometimes if I'm feeling a bit flat I'll scroll through and be reminded of the incredible work

that has been achieved. Then I'm inspired to do what I can to contribute to that.

2da: Can you talk us through your average working day? How do you manage your time as a freelance artist?

MM: My day starts with the typical morning family chaos of getting three kids to their various schools and places of care (I have three daughters aged 15, 12 and 1), then I head home to dive into my studio. I'll stay there as long as I can, usually getting in about 6 hours of painting time before one or all three of the kids need collecting! If I have my one year old at home I paint while she

naps. I just grab any opportunity I can really. I usually do concept development, admin and computer work in the evenings, so my days are clear to just paint. I paint most days.

2da: What would you say has had the biggest impact on your work to date? Was there a moment of revelation or an important turning point in your career?

MM: There hasn't been one big turning point but more a series of little ones. One significant point though was the time I traveled to London, France and Italy on an art viewing trip. It was my first big overseas trip and I went with the assumption that ►



● 'Disillusion/Illusion II', 2015. Oil on board, 250 x 200mm

I would see at least one painting by my favorite artist: Gustav Klimt.

You'd think I would've been well prepared but London went by without finding one. They just weren't on display. After a few days in Paris without seeing one either I became panicky. How could I have come all this way and not see a single Klimt!? Trudging back into central Paris from seeing Notre Dame it was early afternoon on my last day in central France. I remember looking up and seeing a poster with Klimt's 'Judith' and a whole lot of French that I couldn't read.

With my heart racing I deduced that it was indeed an exhibition poster and the dates were current! I had four hours before the venue closed. The race was on! After an hour on foot I finally tracked down the venue only to join the end of a very, very long queue. It almost killed me! Knowing I was so close but stuck outside with only a few hours of opportunity left.

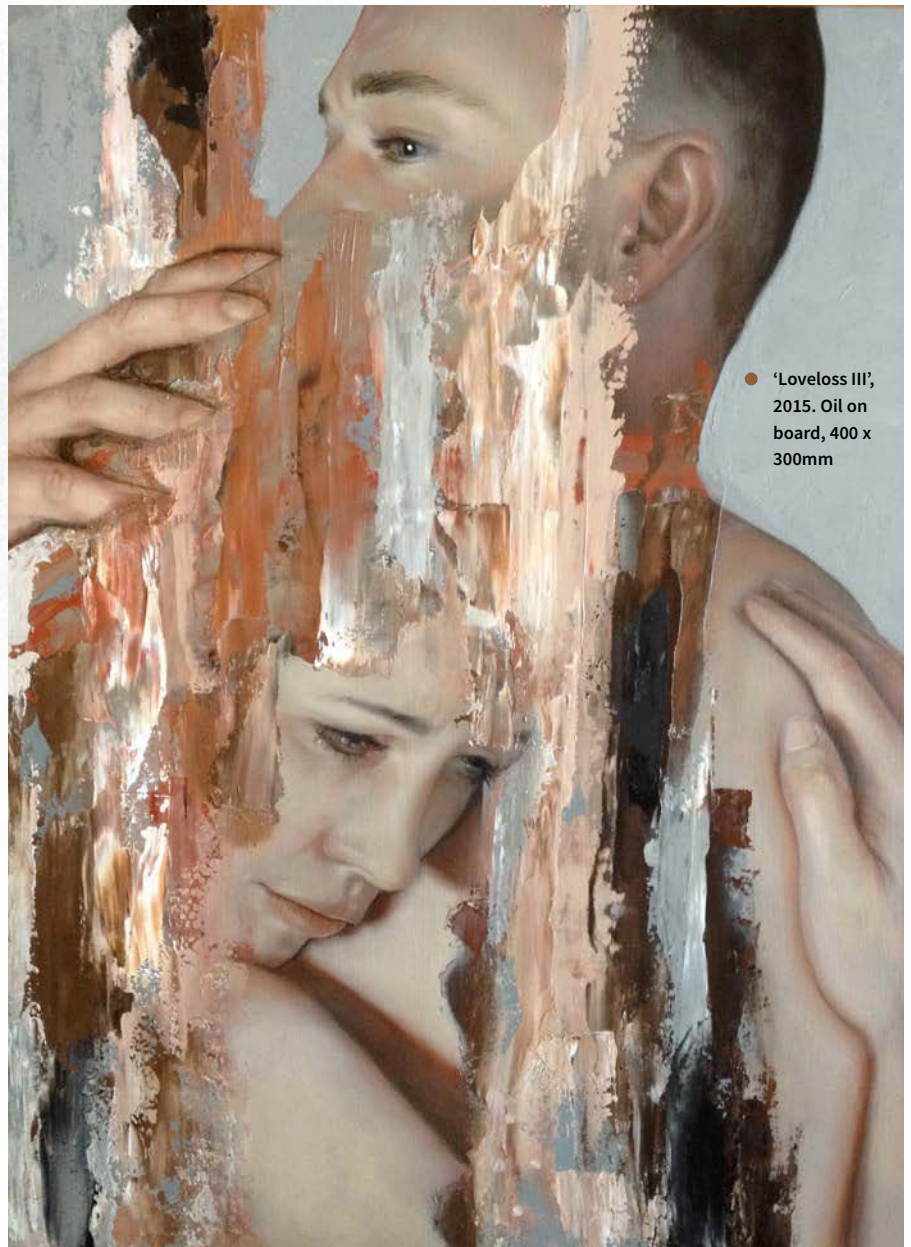
To cut a long story short, I did eventually get inside where I unapologetically elbowed my way through the crowd to see every single Klimt I had seen in print, right up close! I absorbed as much as I could from those paintings in the hour and a half I had. But it was even better than that. Alongside a full retrospective of Klimt's work was also a large display of Schiele, Kokoschka, and others from the Vienna set from the early 1900s. It was a treat I couldn't have even dreamed up! It definitely changed my painting and I'll never forget that experience.

2da: What has been the most challenging aspect of working as a freelance artist?

MM: It can be challenging in the early days to remain confident in your ability and relevance. The number of incredible artists in the world can make you feel small in comparison if you're feeling a little shaky! It's important in these moments to remember that only you can do what you do, and only you will touch certain people with your art. If you have the drive to create, it's important to honor that.

2da: What has been your favorite project or artwork to work on so far?

MM: 'Loveloss II' has been my favorite work to produce to date. I spent many hours on the rendition of the figures, getting them just right. The figure under the abstract paintwork is actually fully rendered. When I got to the stage of adding the gestural paint work my hands were literally shaking and I felt nauseous! This stage of a work often does this to me.



● 'Loveloss III',
2015. Oil on
board, 400 x
300mm

It's make or break time and it's more than possible to ruin hours and hours of painstaking work in a matter of minutes if I'm not fully present and responsive to what I'm creating.

At this stage there's no planning involved but a completely intuitive response. It requires all of me to create this way and it's nerve wracking! But some of that risk I think gets conveyed in the finished piece. It adds to the story of the work. Just like there's risk in creating a relationship, there's risk in creating the work.

2da: Do you have any advice for readers wanting to develop their own work, or begin a career as a freelance artist?

MM: If you want to create for a living, just be diligent, be dedicated and love it even when it's hard to love.

2da: When you are not creating your beautiful works, what do you like to do?

MM: I'll usually be found hanging out with my family. I'm a bit of a bore though; art is central to my life.

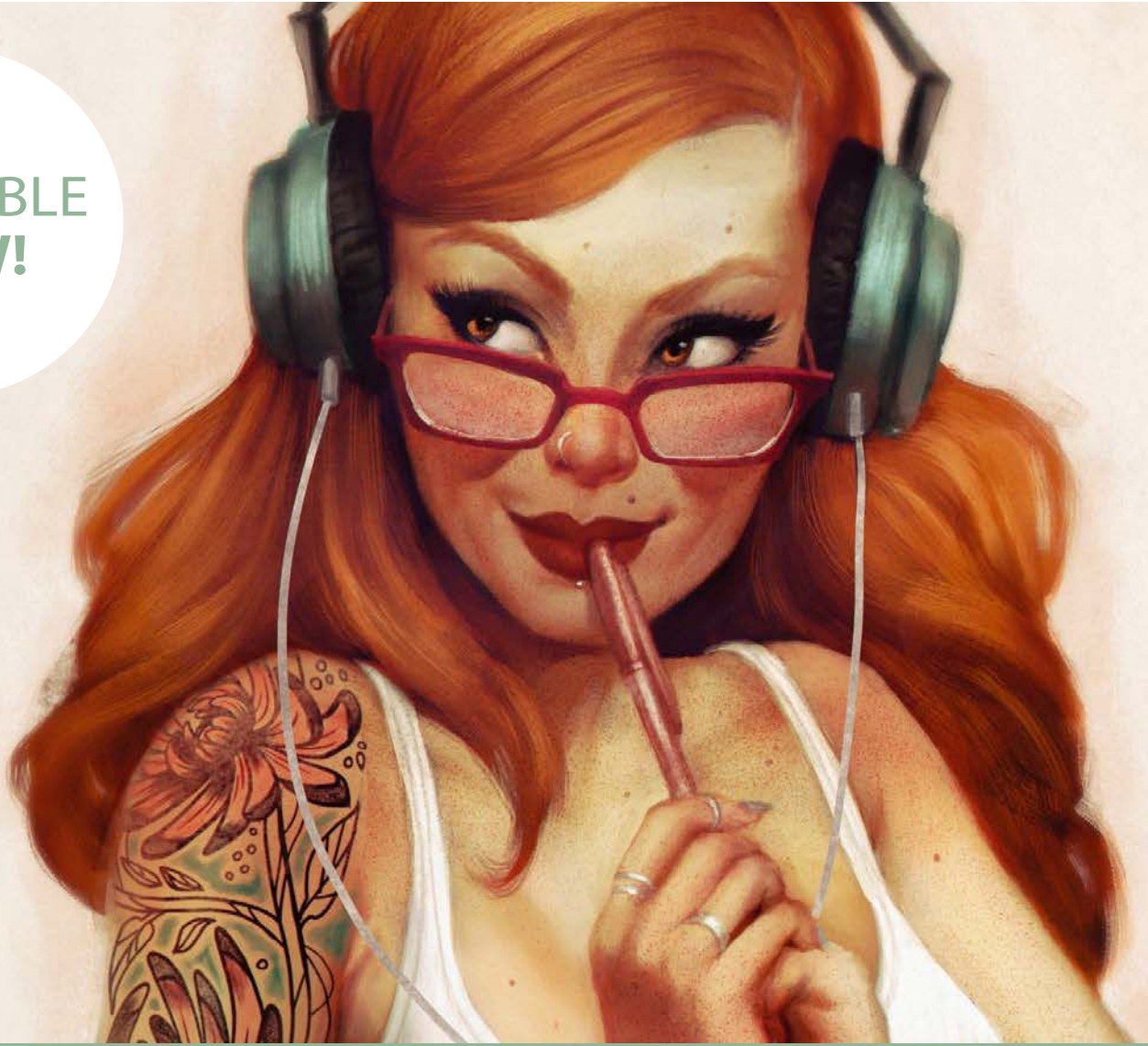
2da: And finally, what can we look forward to from you in the future?

MM: I have a solo show in May at Friends of Leon Gallery in Sydney, Australia that I'm working on at the moment, and numerous group shows throughout the year. The best way to keep tabs on me as I create is to follow my feed on Instagram. I'm happy to share my process as well as the finished pieces. ●

Thank you Meredith for taking the time to speak to 2dartist today!

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OSCAR LLORENS

Sketchbook

Discover the inventively dream-like
traditional sketches of freelance
illustrator Oscar Llorens

The Artist



Oscar Llorens
oscarllorens.com

Oscar Llorens is a freelance illustrator working from his studio in Madrid. As well as being a freelance illustrator, Oscar has worked in a few advertising agencies in Spain.

Explore Oscar's imaginative and creative world of ink and pencil sketches...

The sketching stage is the part of my job which I enjoy the most. In this stage of the process you are really free to do what you want. I remember that since I was very young I was drawing more or less almost all of the time.

Now when I work on a commission, I will usually do a really finished sketch because this often helps the client to see clearly how the final project will look.

Normally it is in this phase that you are able to take more risks, rather than in the final stage of the creative process.

Inspiration and ideas

I find inspiration in almost anything and everywhere. Of course I grew up with TV and now with the development of the internet everything you see could be used as a reference. Sometimes you are aware of the things you reference but other times you are not.

In the last few years social media has let me follow some artists that have really impressed me. In this way Facebook and Instagram are able to become great professional tools. Some artists that I have recently discovered are Kim Jung Gi and James Jean.

Materials

As I told you in the introduction, I really like to sketch. So the materials I like use often are pencils

and markers. Those are the tools which let me have a lot of freedom and control in the very first stages of creativity.

When I am working on an advertising project I also use digital tools such as a Wacom Cintiq and Photoshop to sketch too.

Sketching techniques

When it comes to my sketching techniques, most of the time I will use Photoshop to sketch on a commercial project. The digital techniques this software enables me to use lets me work faster than I can when sketching traditionally. However, in my personal projects I always use graphite pencils or ink tools, as I prefer not to use any digital methods when I am working just for myself and my own pleasure.

● A marker pen sketch for Inktober



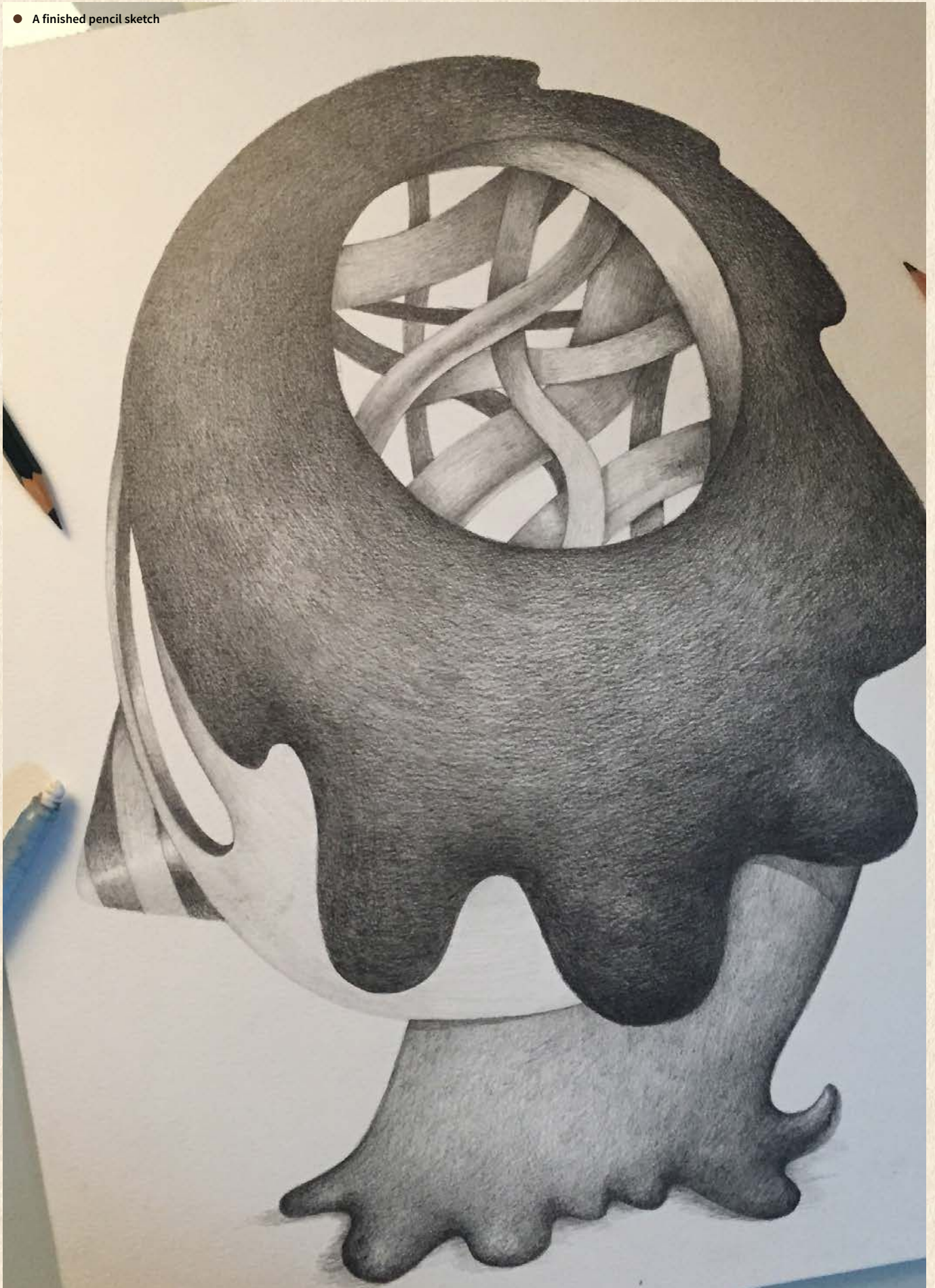


● Oscar's moleskin and tools



● A work in progress of one of Oscar's recent pencil sketches

● A finished pencil sketch





● A ballpoint pen sketch for day one of Inktober 2015

● An ink sketch of a sumo wrestler

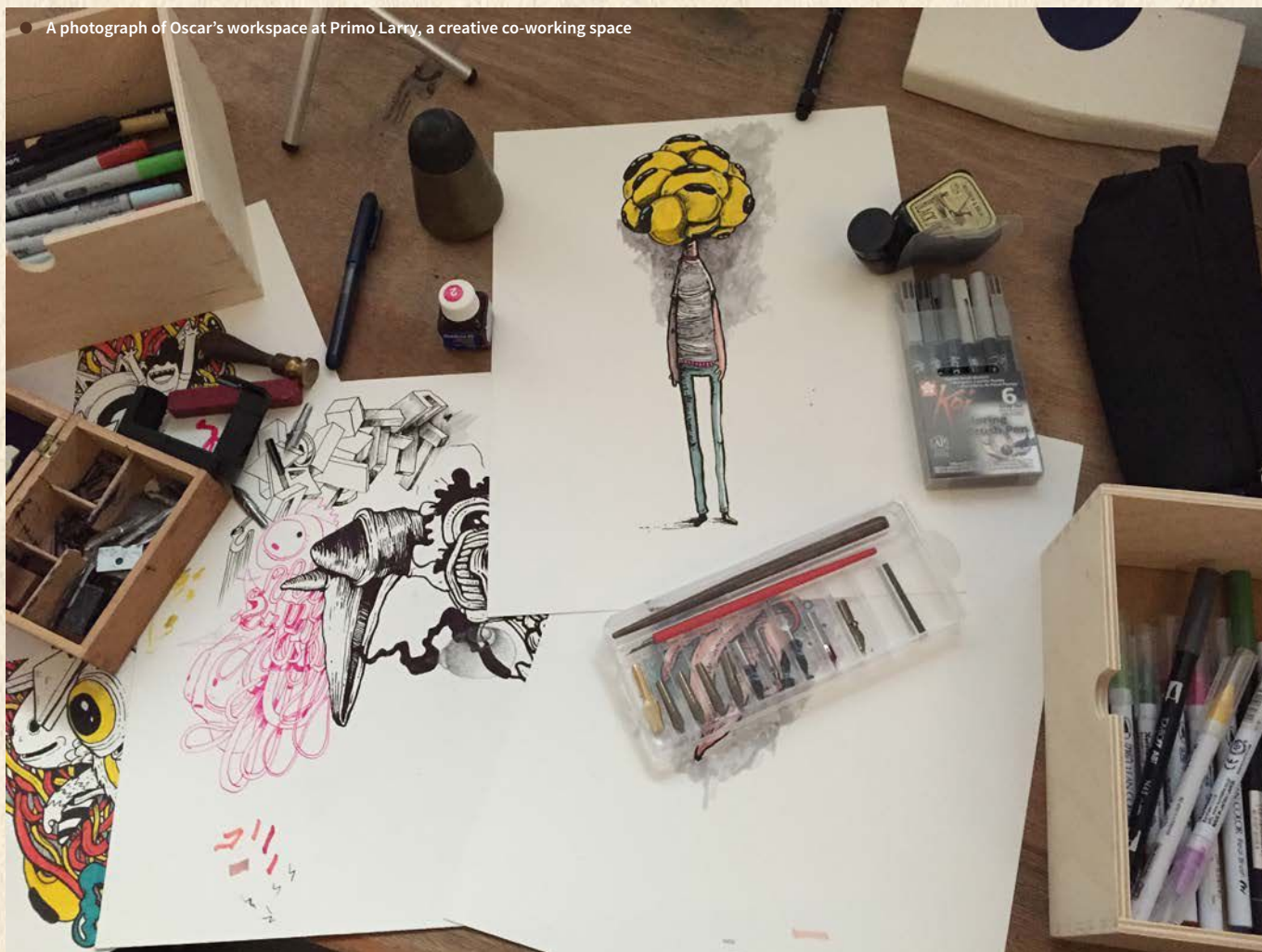


- A moleskin sketch of a character returning to school



SKETCHBOOK OF OSCAR WORENS

- A photograph of Oscar's workspace at Primo Larry, a creative co-working space



- A sketch exploring ways to present the word "Akeku"





● A sketch of one of Oscar's characters, Eye Man



● A sketch exploring typographic illustration

2dartist

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images or a link to your portfolio online, plus a
little information about you.

We look forward to hearing from you!

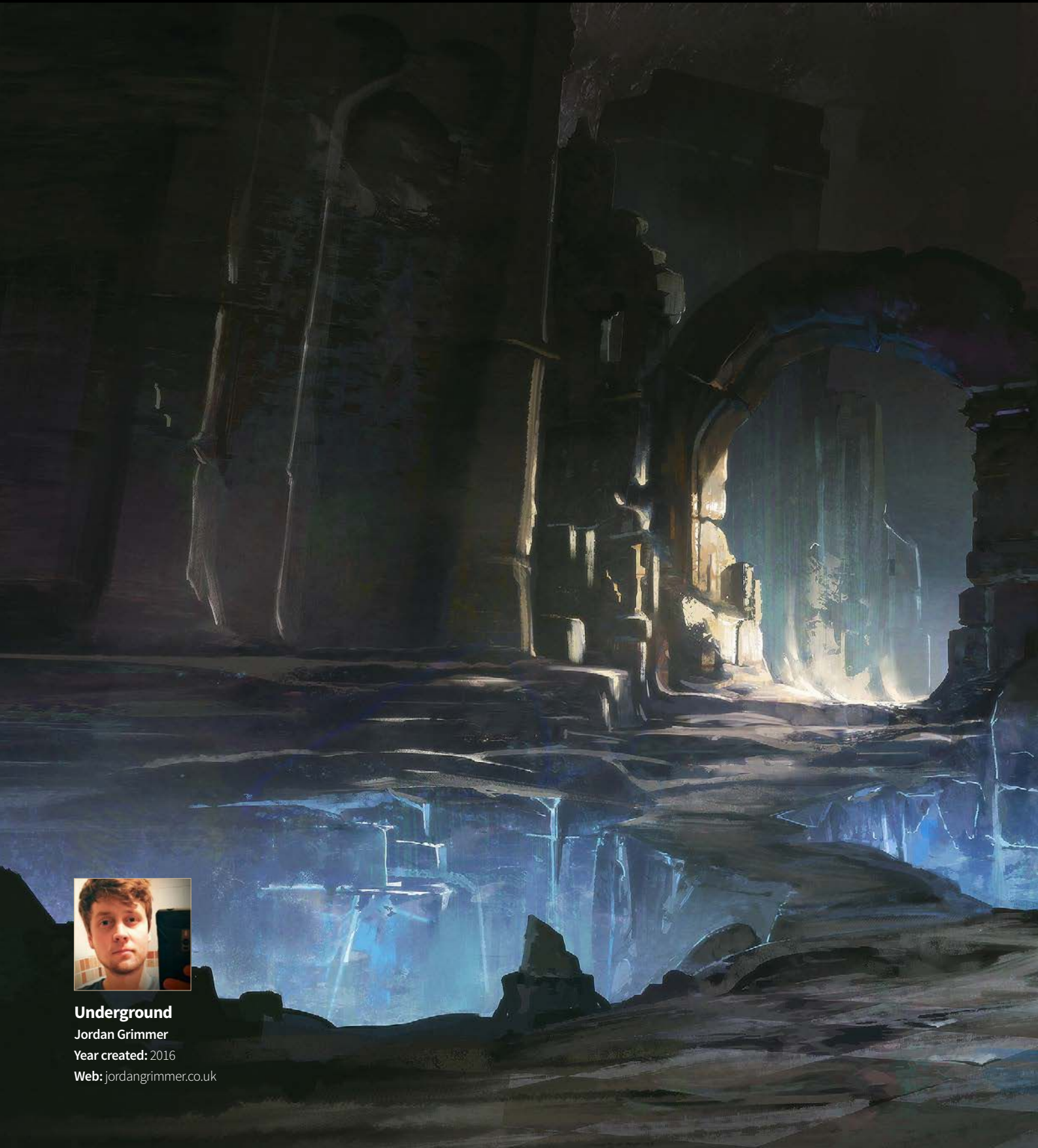
**Do you struggle to get over a
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2dartist will be running a new feature where professional artists will give advice on your creative problems. If you have a creative area you would like help to improve on, get in touch!

Submit your question by simply emailing Annie at annie@3dtotal.com with the title '2dartist Clinic'.

Art Gallery

Each issue the 2dartist team selects 10 of the best digital images from around the world. Enjoy!



Underground

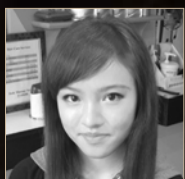
Jordan Grimmer

Year created: 2016

Web: jordangrimmer.co.uk

Submit your images! Simply email annie@3dtotal.com





Madness

Emi Chen

Year created: 2015

Web: emichenart.com

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**EVO-KnightBot
Mk-21**

F-F (Federico Ferrarese)

Year created: 2016

Web: [artstation.com/
artist/f-f](https://www.artstation.com/artist/f-f)



Madrid 1939

David Gau

Year created: 2016

Web: davidgau.blogspot.com







Dream

João Paulo Bragato

Year created: 2016

Web: artstation.com/artist/bragato

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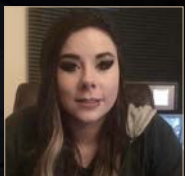


Centaur Hunting

Nicolas Chacin

Year created: 2015

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Working in the Lab

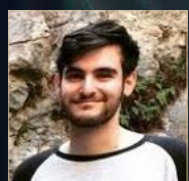
Sarah McCulloch

Year created: 2016

Web: artstation.com/artist/sarahmcculloch







Quarantine Ward

Hakob Minasian

Year created: 2016

Web: hakobminasian.artstation.com

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Dock

Anton Fedotov

Year created: 2015

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Caelus's Assault

Temarius Walker

Year created: 2016

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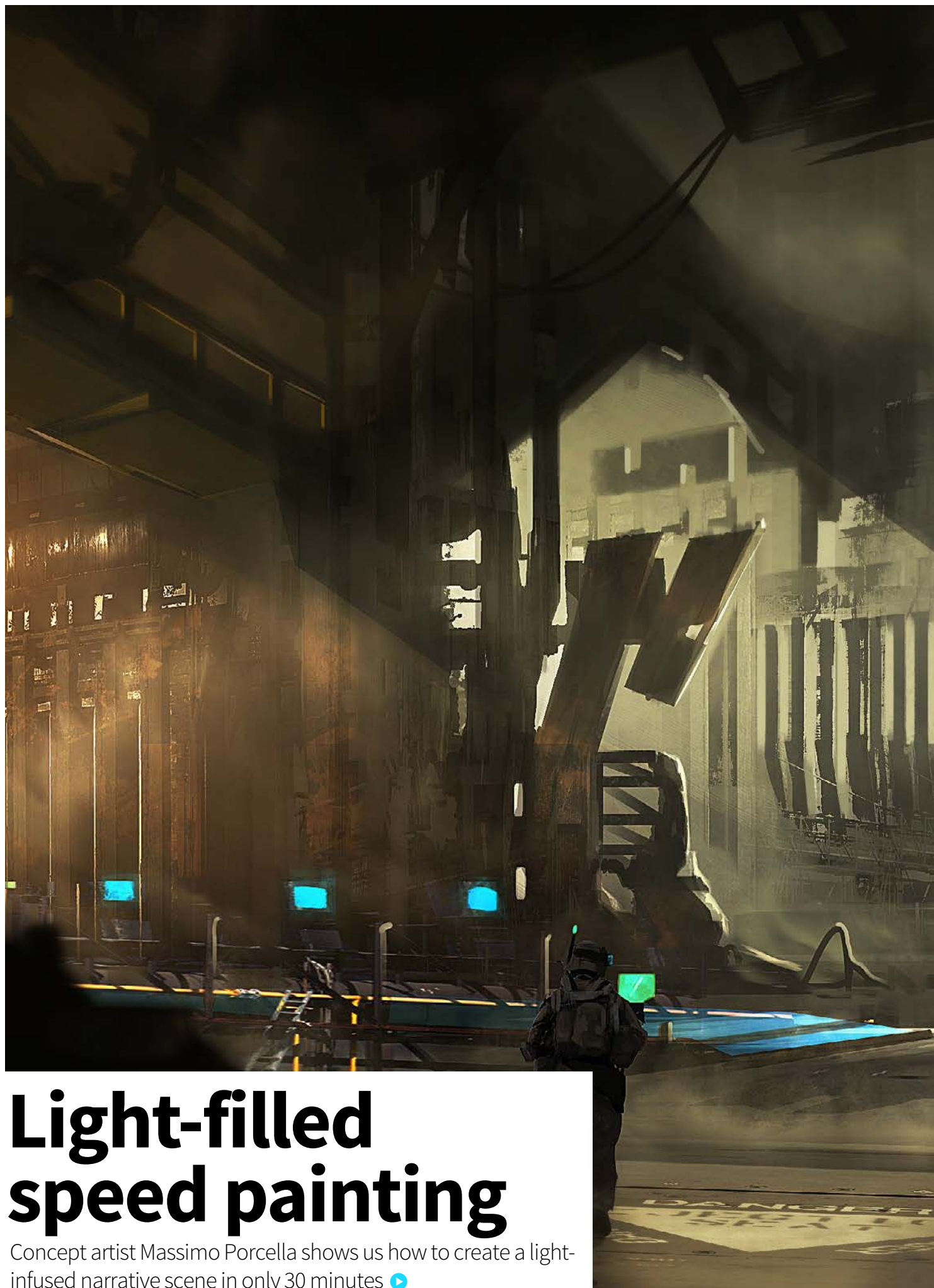
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Light-filled speed painting

Concept artist Massimo Porcella shows us how to create a light-infused narrative scene in only 30 minutes [▶](#)



The Artist



Massimo Porcella

artstation.com/artist/max

Software Used:
Photoshop

Massimo Porcella is a freelance concept artist and tutor from Genova, Italy. His works include dramatic fantasy and sci-fi environments which are often on an epic scale.

Get tips on creating effective light, interesting textures and developing contrast...

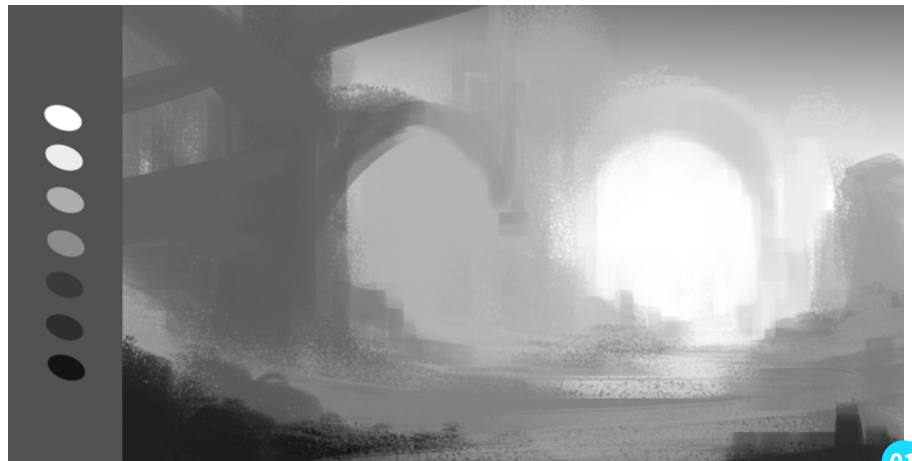
Hi everybody! I'm Massimo Porcella and I am a freelance concept artist at Untold Games, Foofa Studios and Milestone, and a concept and environment design tutor at iMasterArt. In this tutorial I will show you how to quickly create, in only 30 minutes, a sci-fi speed painting using structural shapes, texturing and color.

01 Idea and sketch: Let's start with a black and white color palette, to create a composition. Now that I have these tonal values I can start to give a structure to my idea with a quick sketch. I close this phase by drawing an entrance in the background in order to create a basic structure that will help me to block the composition in the next steps.

02 Perspective and shape: I need to create a shape that will define the style of my speed painting. I want to indicate that this is a sci-fi scene so the structure is typically industrial looking. In this case I won't use a structural shape as a main subject, but as an anatomical extension of my environment. I quickly draw a perspective to finish my sketch, making sure every object is in the right position.

03 Painting and volumes: I use the Curves tool to give contrast to the sketch and then I start to paint the volumes. This quickly builds up my background. Now I start work on the central part of the image to give it more shape and volume.

04 Contrast, ground and wing: Let's add more contrast with the Curves ►



01

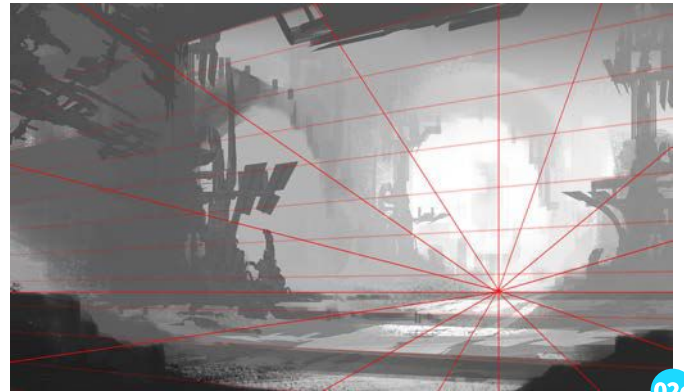


02a

- 01** A quick black and white value sketch helps to block in the composition
- 02a** A structure helps to define the style of the painting
- 02b** The structure can be used as an extension of the environment
- 02c** Check the positioning of your objects with perspective lines
- 03a** Use the Curves tool to create contrast
- 03b** Massimo then focuses on building shape and volume to the central part



02b



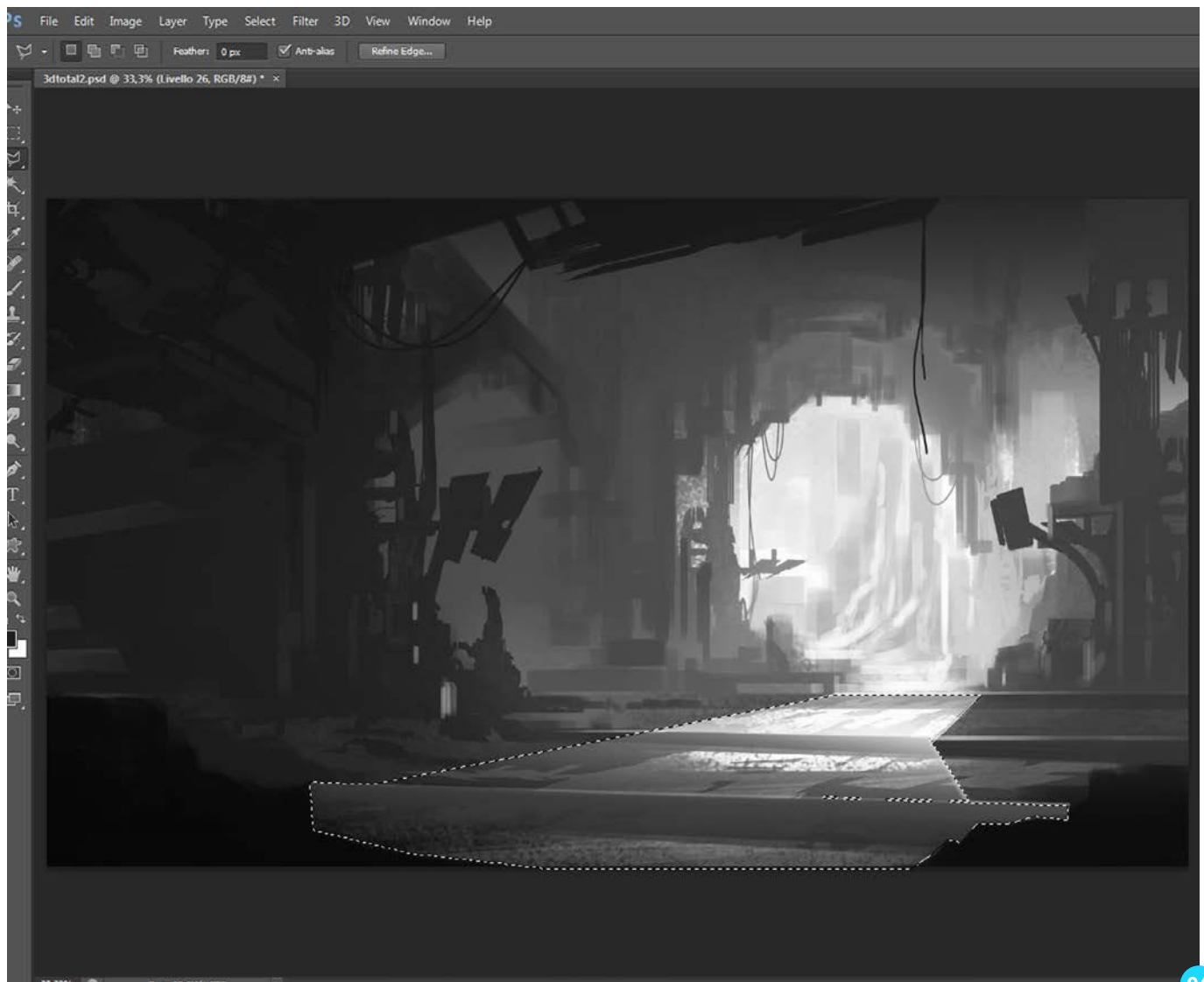
02c



03a



03b



04

again giving more importance to the light at the entrance. Add more definition in this way to the ground and create some sort of footbridge with the polygonal Lasso tool. Now that the background and the middle ground are defined, let's take care of the wing that I will draw using my shape.

05 Texturing: Texturing is one of the quickest and most fun parts of the working process. When I start to explore and think about ideas of what I want to do, I immediately start gathering pictures and references that I can use to texture my work from personal resources and the internet. I will use parts of these photos to add texture on different levels, and with different blending modes. I will mostly focus on the middle ground and foreground.

06 Base color: Here I start looking for a base color. As tends to happen in a traditional painting, I start using the Gradient tool and playing with Photoshop's blending modes, using Color, Soft Light, Overlay or whatever I need



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to give a sense of the colors in the scene. The mode I choose depends on the tone values of each sketch I work on.

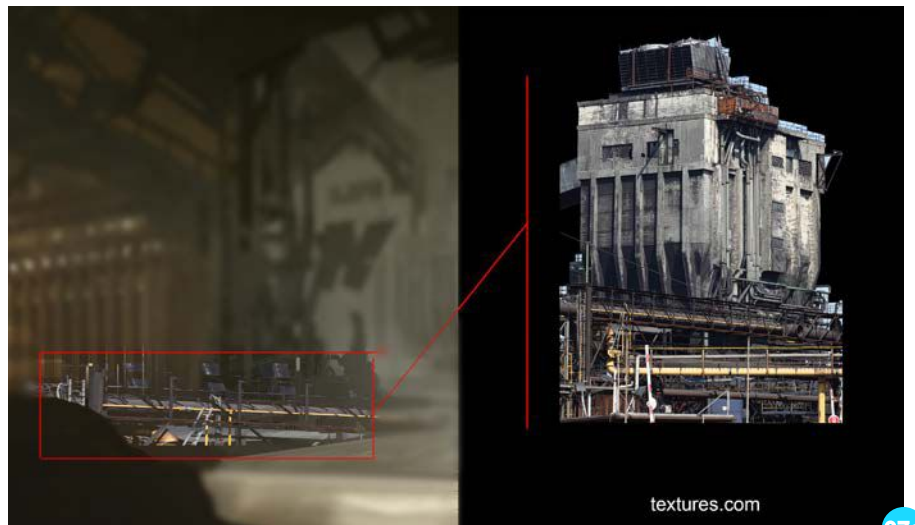
07 Texturing block: To give the image much greater detail, I decide to add in another texture. At this stage in the texturing

process I use a photographic element as a shape for my sketch. In this case I use the lower part of my photographic element to create the footbridge, and using the Distort setting for the Transform tool I can then modify the perspective of the photographic block in order to give it the shape that I need. ▶



06

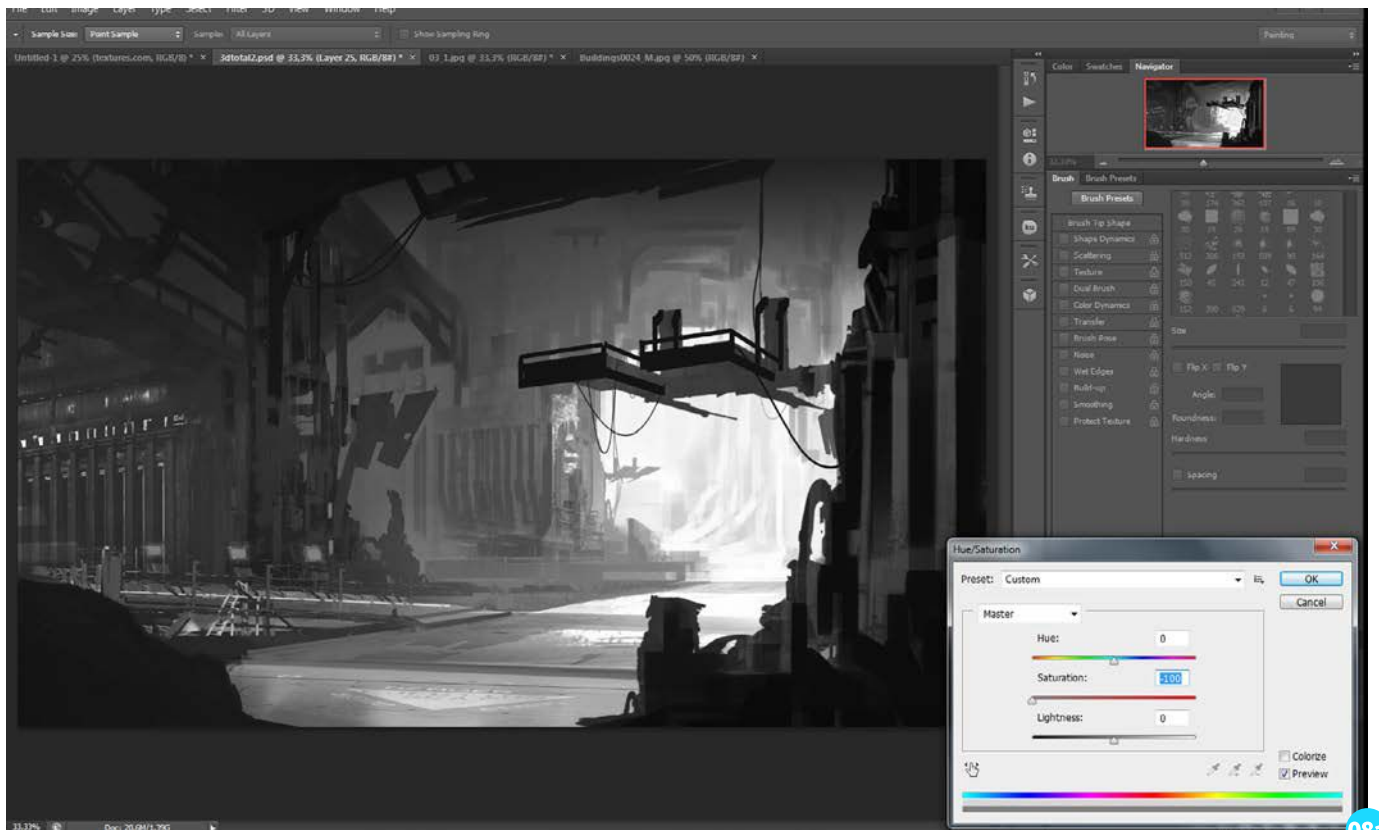
- 04 Define the middle ground with a light flooded footbridge
- 05 Use photo textures to create interest in the foreground and middle ground
- 06 Use the Gradient tool and blending modes to create a color base
- 07a The lower portion of a photo texture is added to create an industrial footbridge
- 07b The block is then distorted with the Transform tool to fit the image



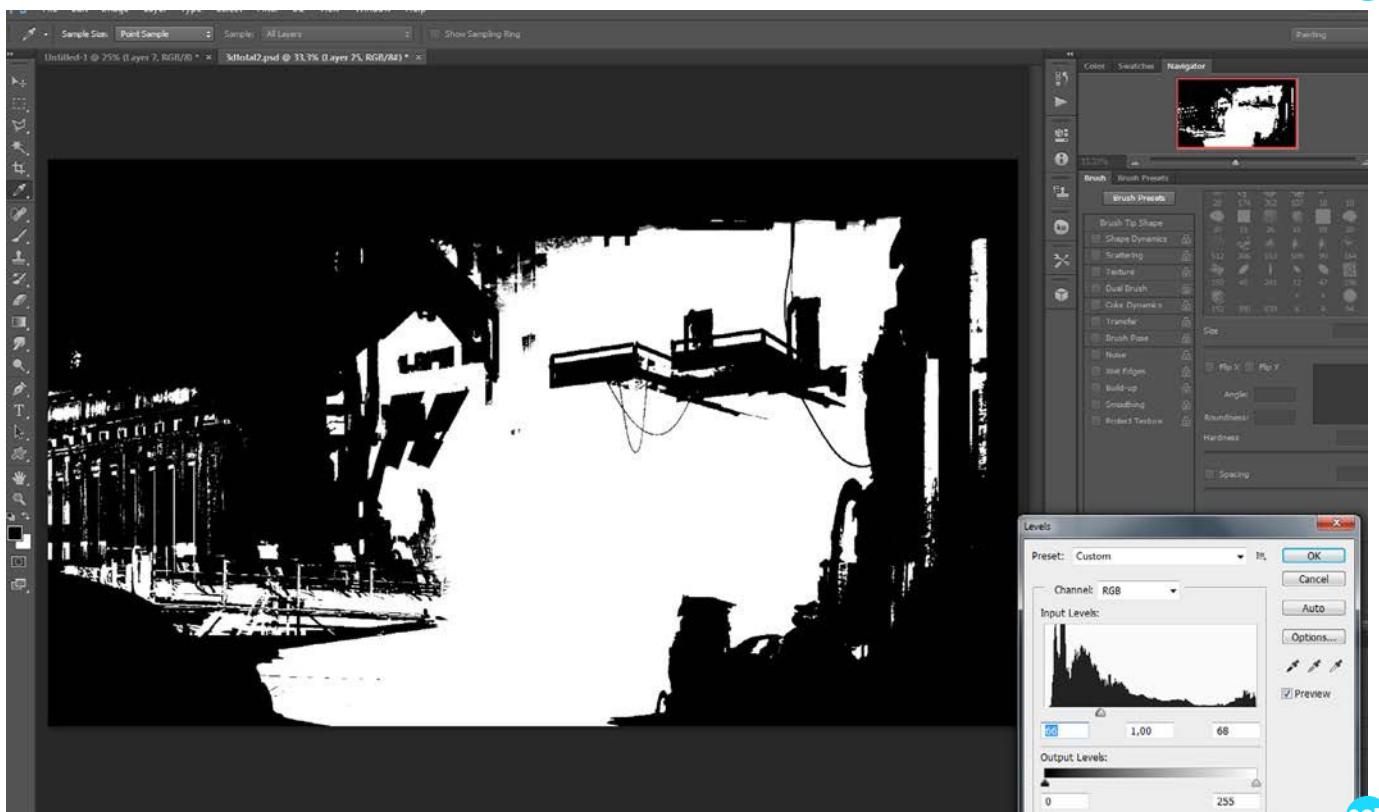
07a



07b



08a



08b

08 Shadows: Now let's merge the levels in to one layer (Ctrl + Alt + Shift + E).

Turn it to black and white to desaturate it and then use a Levels adjustment to capture the maximum white point and the minimum black point. This will allow me to create as much

contrast in the image as I can. Using the Magic Wand tool, I select the blacks to create a mask selection, and then I create a new level that I will paint with the Gradient tool using the mask that I've just obtained. Now I slightly blur the furthest part of the image to give it an even greater sense of depth.

09 Contrast and light: To further the contrast and improve the light levels in the image, I now play with the Curves tool. I lower the black hues and give more strength to the whites (only slightly). Then I push up the lighting in the scene, reinforcing the volumetric effect using the Soft Light setting.

10 **Mood and rim light:** This is one of the most fun parts of the process. Now that the contrast between light and shadow is strong enough, I can give the scene even more depth by adding a rim light to the borders of the volumes.

This will also help me to detach the separate planes assuring that the objects on each plane will all be readable. Let's also take care of the particle effects and the mood. This will make the scene more dynamic and will increase the general sense of depth in the image.

Think about how in the classic old Western movie scenes, we would see static city scenarios but suddenly the scene would be brought to life by a ball of hay crossing it. In digital art, separating planes has the same effect of indicating depth in a flat scene.

11 **Character:** I now draw the silhouette of a character into the scene to give it a greater sense of narrative. I want to show a soldier passing by with a device to check the environment. Once I have created the silhouette, I use the color palette to paint over his volumes. This helps to incorporate the character into the environment setting.

12 **Boosting light and depth:** At last I reach the final stages of the process. I decide to make the light stronger on the left side of the image. As you can see I have divided my lighting into three main situations which controls the eye of the viewer and leads their view around the scene.

I finish off by blurring the wing on the left side to suggest a depth of field that might be seen if the viewer was in the scene or viewing it with a moving camera. ●



09



10

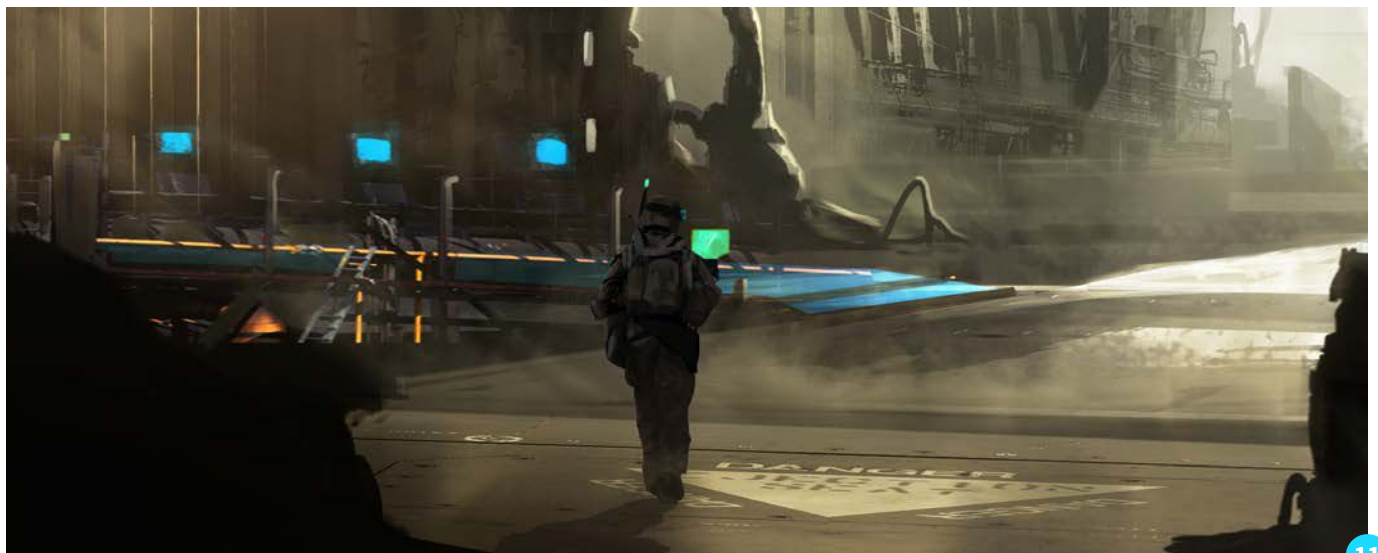
08a Merge the layers together

08b Using Levels maximize the contrast in the image before creating a layer mask

09 Add more contrast and light to the scene using the Curves tool and Soft Light

10 Using rim light on objects helps to separate layers giving the scene depth

11 Create a character silhouette to give a sense of narrative



11

The Artist



Massimo Porcella
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The Artist



Thomas Stoop

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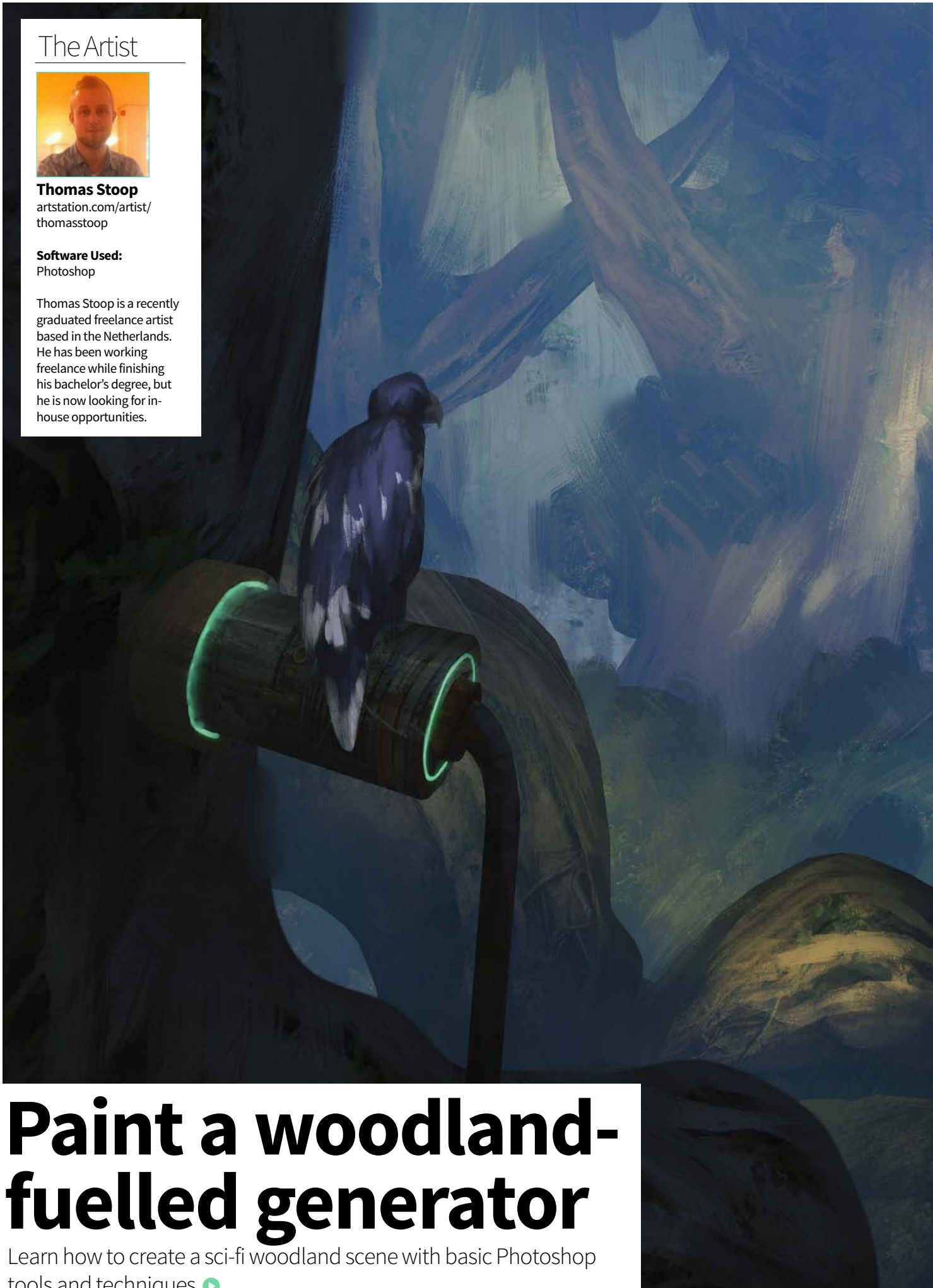
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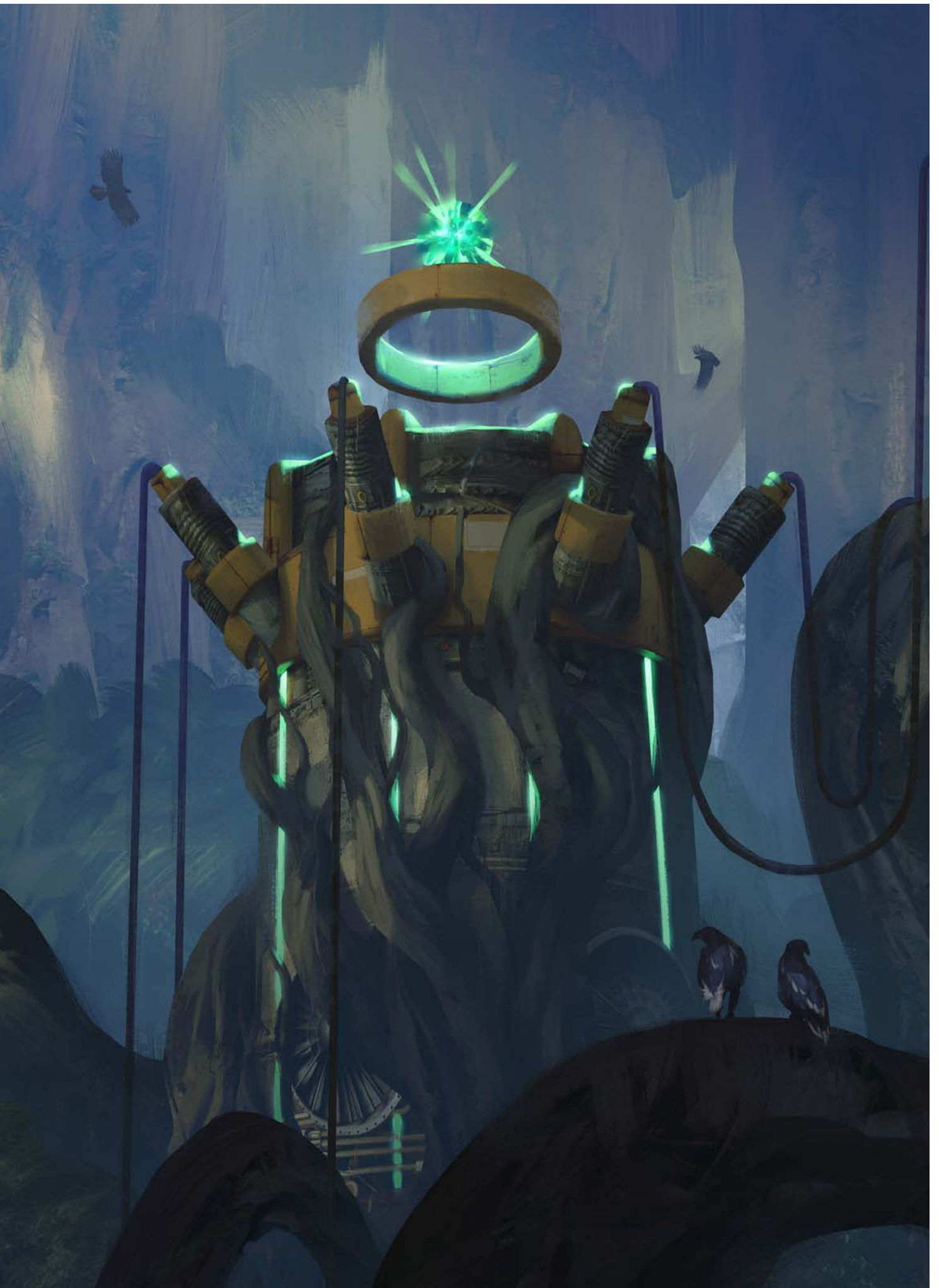
Photoshop

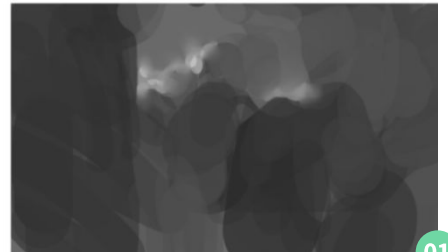
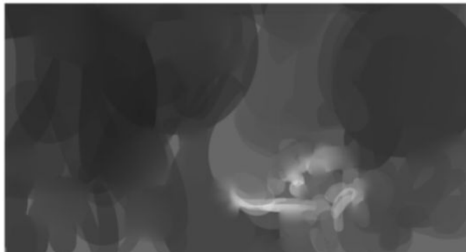
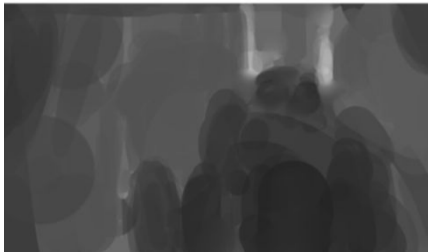
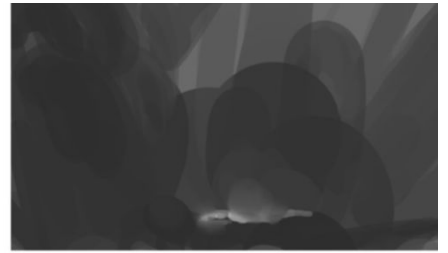
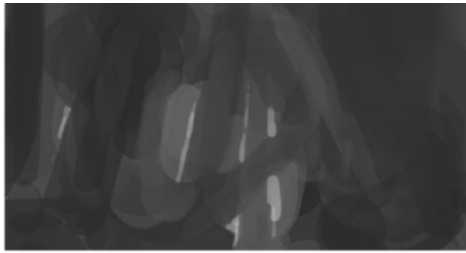
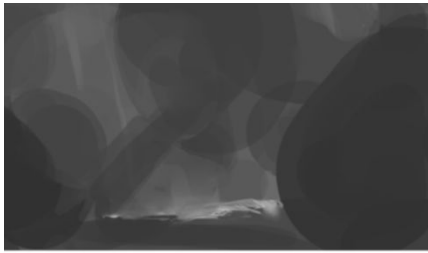
Thomas Stoop is a recently graduated freelance artist based in the Netherlands. He has been working freelance while finishing his bachelor's degree, but he is now looking for in-house opportunities.

Paint a woodland-fuelled generator

Learn how to create a sci-fi woodland scene with basic Photoshop tools and techniques [▶](#)







01

Create some cool images with the standard Photoshop tools and settings...

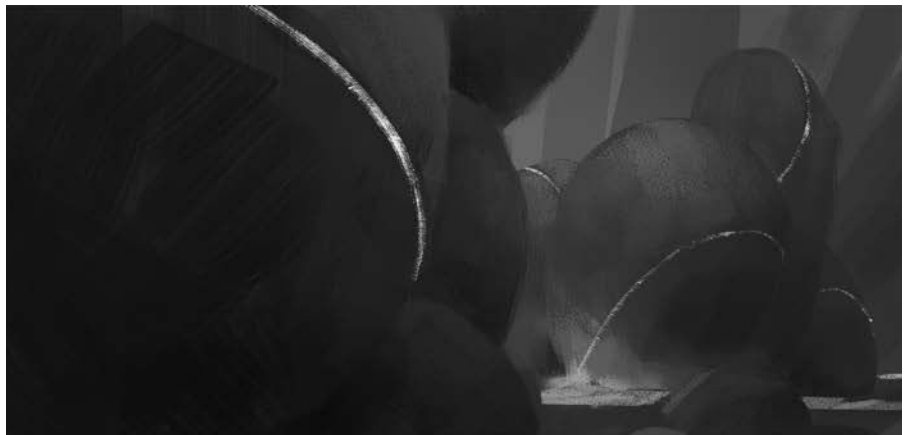
For this tutorial I will be making an environment piece depicting sci-fi woodlands. I will use a workflow that I don't necessarily always follow, but it does explain a lot of the techniques that I often use.

This is a pretty easy way of working since I will be building the image up from the ground, tackling each problem one at a time. I will begin by making thumbnails, choosing one and then slowly working the rest of the scene out from there.

Like I said, I don't always use exactly this workflow, and I think it's best for you to take from this tutorial what you think is valuable. So if there's something you like, add it to your workflow and make it your own. To follow this tutorial you will only need Photoshop. I used a little bit of 3D in this image, but this is an optional choice.

01 Creating quick thumbnails: At this point I have absolutely no idea what I'm going to make yet, so in order to get some ideas I start off by creating a couple of thumbnails. The point of making these thumbnails is to focus on big shapes and contrast and avoid going into great detail.

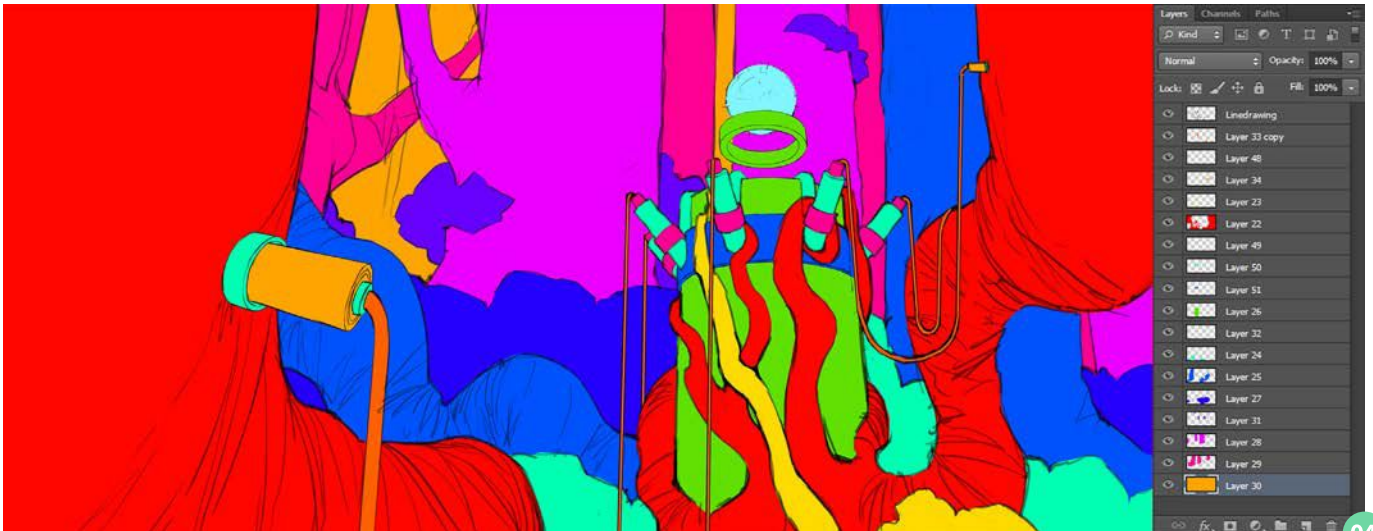
I prefer to make my thumbnails all on one canvas so that I can easily switch back and forth between the thumbnails if necessary. I set this up by creating a new layer and filling this layer with black rectangles (although these can be any color you like) using the Rectangular Marquee tool (Ctrl+M) and the Paint Bucket tool (Ctrl+G). Next I use the "Lock transparent pixels" setting (a small checker icon above your layers) so that



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whenever I paint on this layer it will stay within the rectangles.

Now I can quickly paint some thumbnails while keeping the canvas clean. Remember, these thumbnails don't have to be amazing paintings; they are only used to help you generate ideas.

02 Further exploring thumbnails: Out of these six rough thumbnails I now choose three to explore a little more before I select a final composition. I still keep all the thumbnails black and white because color isn't important to me at this point. For now it's all about getting the right concept, I will worry about color later.

While I'm making these thumbnails I am trying to decide which one interests me the most story-wise. For the third thumbnail I'm thinking of a scene where there is this massive generator-like machine absorbing energy, or something similar, out of the environment. I like this idea so I'm going to continue exploring that one in my scene.

03 Making a line drawing: This thumbnail gives me a good base to start from, but it is lacking a lot of definition, and it's still very abstract. To fix this I make a simple line sketch on a new layer to flesh out the idea a bit more and to give me a solid base to continue from.

Whenever I have a building or other geometrical shapes in a piece I like to use 3D models to speed up the process. In this case I make a generator using primitives in MODO which I will use as a base to make my line drawing on top of. You can use any 3D program for this, but if you are new to 3D I suggest using SketchUp since it's free to use and easy to get into. However, these are just tools to speed up the process, it's not a necessity to use them if you don't want to.

04 Setting up shapes: Next up I separate all the different elements in the scene by making a selection of an object with the Polygonal Lasso tool (Ctrl+L) and filling the selection with the Paint Bucket tool (Ctrl+G). I

keep doing this until everything in the scene has its own layer. It doesn't really matter what color you use to fill the selections since you won't see these after the next step.

As an example I fill the objects in my scene with very bright colors to give you an idea of how I separate all the elements in the scene. The ▶

01 A series of quick thumbnails will suffice to generate ideas

02 Spend just enough time on the thumbnails to show what's going on in each scene

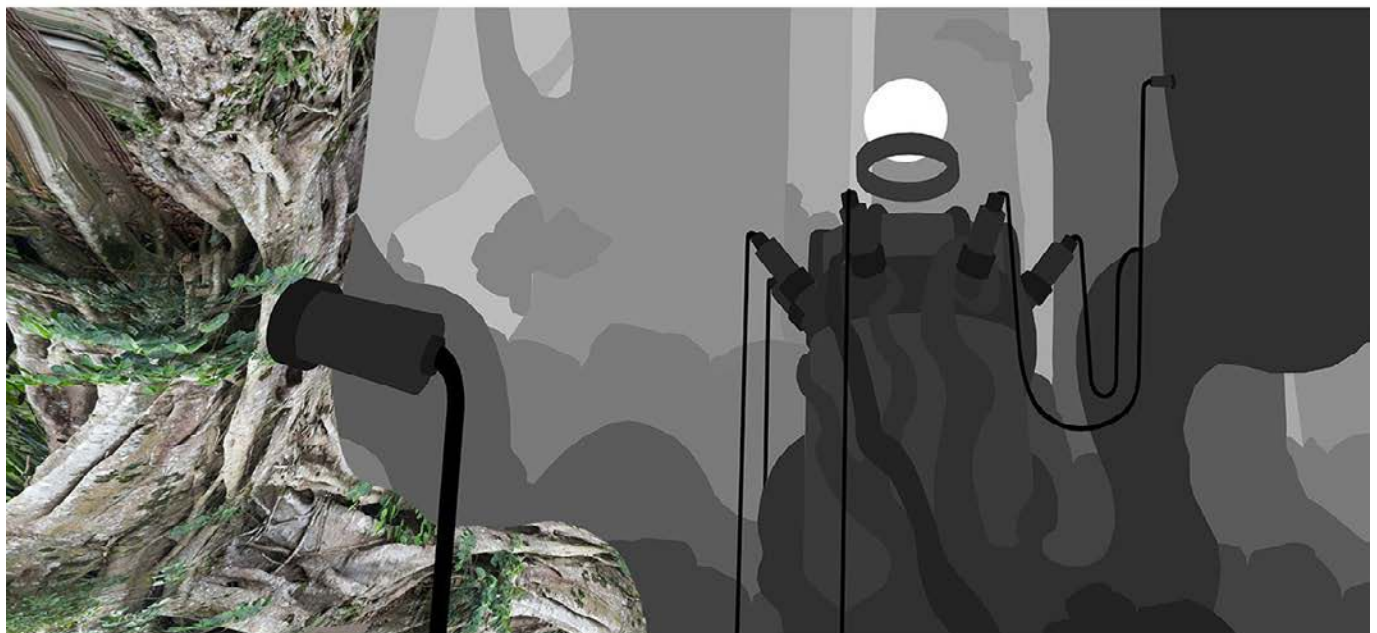
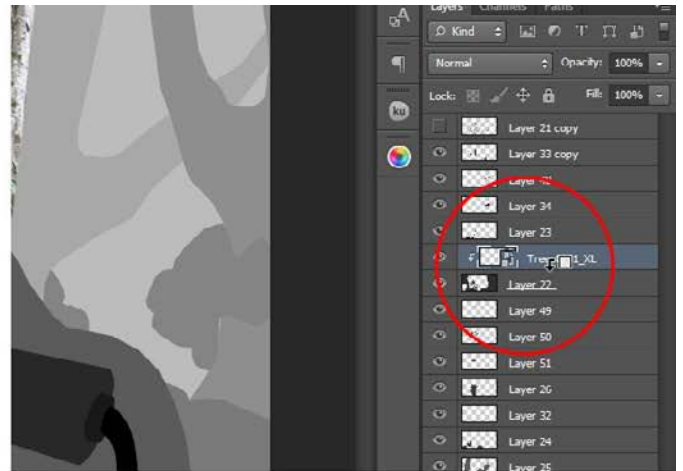
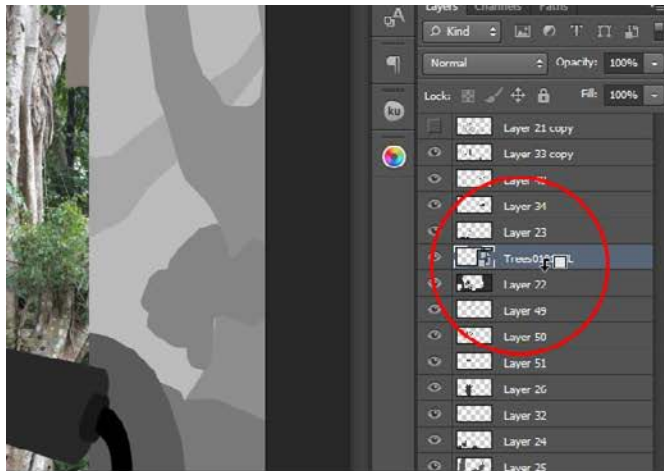
03 Making a line drawing will help you define the elements in the scene

04 Every color in this image has its own layer which is necessary for the following steps

downside of this workflow is I'm working with a lot of layers which can get confusing, but I can easily navigate these layers by selecting the Move tool (Ctrl+V) and Ctrl+click on an object to select that layer.

05 Time to photo-bash: Now that I have all the layers set up it's time to paste in some photos from www.textures.com that will give the scene some texture and color. I do this by dragging in a photo of, in this case, a tree. I put

the layer of this tree above the shape I want to use it on. Then by switching between these two layers using Alt+click, I will create a Clipping Mask. This means that the tree photo won't leave the boundaries of the shape I created earlier.





06



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Now that the photo is clipped to the object below it, I can freely transform (Edit > Free Transform, or Ctrl+T) the photo. In this case I like to use Warp Transform (right-click when transforming > Warp) since the shape is supposed to feel organic.

I will use the same photo a couple of times to fill in the entire shape and then go on to the next one. Keep repeating this step until the canvas looks like a random mash-up of textures. The end result of this step looks worse than what I started with, but that's intentional. I swear.

06 Adding values: The amount of layers can be quite messy at this point so I merge some of the photo layers together by selecting a layer and going to Layer > Merge Down (or simply press Ctrl+E). However, make sure that you still keep all the objects separate!

Before I continue I like to take out some of the noise from the photos by selecting the photo layer and adding a Surface Blur (Filter > Blur > Surface Blur). I use a radius of twenty-five and a threshold of twenty which I use to brush away some details using any texture brush.

Next I create some atmospheric perspective by changing the value of all the shapes. I use Levels adjustment layers for this, which can be found in the drop-down menu when you click on the circle icon (half-white, half-black) underneath your layers. Adjustment layers can also be clipped to the shape layers as I did with the photos.

Now I mess around with the Levels parameters here until the values feel right to me. I keep doing this for every object until the image becomes more readable.

07 Adding some colors: At this point everything kind of has the same color so I feel it's time to add some color in to the atmosphere. The color of the atmosphere here on Earth (assuming this scene takes place on Earth) is blue, so everything that is further into the

05 Use a Clipping Mask and the Warp Transform tool to make photo-bashing look more organic

06 Using adjustment layers to change the values of an image makes it more readable

07 Use Blending modes such as Color Balance and Color Dodge to add color and light into the scene

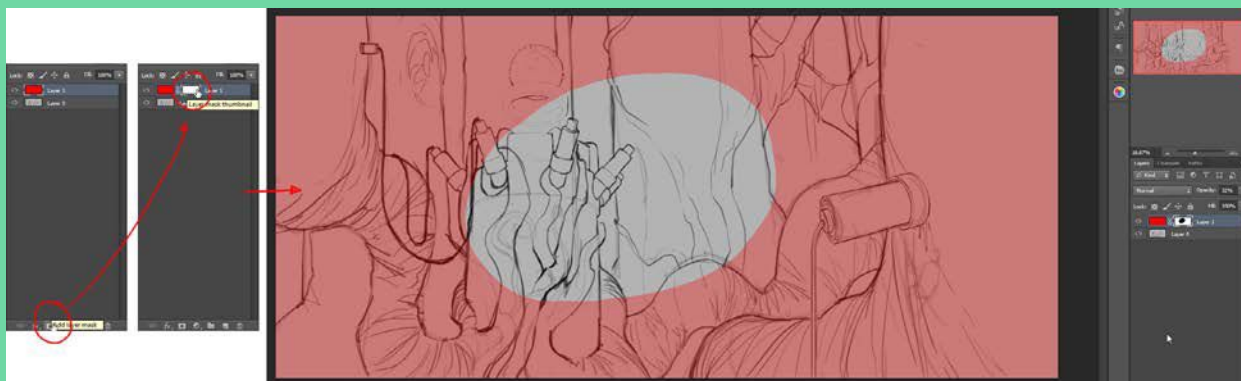


08

PRO TIP Layer Mask

I pretty much always use Layer Masks for everything when I am painting in Photoshop. You can add a Layer Mask to a layer by pressing the little rectangle icon (with a circle in it) below the layers. This in a way adds a layer to your layer in which you can paint using black, white and every shade in between. Black works like an eraser while white brings everything back.

I use this, for example, with a Levels adjustment layer (which automatically is assigned with a Layer Mask) to paint certain areas lighter or darker while the rest of the canvas stays the same. Here I add a low opacity red layer to the image. Then I add a Layer Mask to the red layer and paint in a circle in the layer mask using black, which erases the red. If I were to paint over it with white, the red would then come back again.



distance gets a blue-ish color. I do this by adding another adjustment layer (again using the black and white circle icon), but this time I choose Color Balance. I will put the blending mode on Color (drop-down menu above the layers that says "Normal") to make sure the color changes, but the values of the image stay the same.

I feel like my scene also needs some light coming through the trees, so I add a new layer and putting the blending mode on to Color Dodge. On this Color Dodge layer I can start to paint in

light using a brown-yellowish color to emulate sunlight. I'm also painting a little bit here and there with a normal texture brush (a brush with some texture to it) to cover some of the photo and separate the different layers a bit more.

08 Just keep going: I think the background could still use a lot more atmospheric perspective, so I add a new layer and put the blending mode on Lighten. Whenever I add a color to this layer, it will only show if it's lighter than the value that's already there. This is an easy

way that you can get rid of dark spots and adds a really nice blue layer to the background. I do the same for some of the elements on the mid-ground to further separate the layers.

As you can see I also keep painting out noise to make the image as clean as possible without destroying the texture too much. It's best to have the majority of detail at your focal point in order to get the viewer's attention. A good way to paint out the noise, but still keep some sort of texture, is by using the Mixer brush. This brush can be



09

found under the Brush tool. To easily switch between brush tools press Shift+B. I prefer to put the settings of the Mixer Brush on “Dry, Heavy Load” and use a Texture brush. Pressing Alt+click will sample a spot from the image and then you can just use it as a normal brush. It will use the color and texture from the sampled spot, giving it a painterly feel.

09 The glowing orb: Now it's time to work on the glowing orb that's floating above the generator. Since it's quite small I'm making this layer into a Smart Object. Right-click on the layer and select “Convert to Smart object”. You can now double-click on the layer to open the Smart Object as if it were a separate file. The nice thing about Smart Objects is that you can scale up the image within the Smart Object (Image > Image Size, or Ctrl+Alt+I) so you won't have to work on a tiny resolution. Ctrl+S will save the Smart Object and then add the changes to the original file.

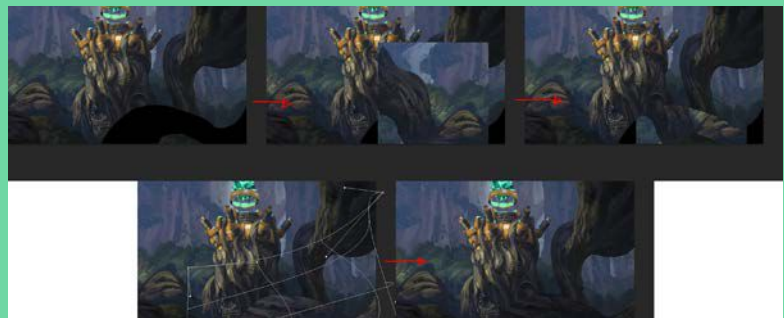
Keep in mind that when you increase the image size within the Smart Object, you will have to scale it down afterwards in the original scene. This may sound a bit weird, but you will get the hang of it once you have messed around with it for a bit.

The environment is a mixture of blue and red colors, so I'm giving the orb a saturated cyan color to contrast with the rest of the scene. Color contrasts will instantly grab the attention of the viewer so keep in mind that strong color contrasts should only be used at points of interest. In this case I'm using the same color on the injectors in the roots to make them pop out a bit as secondary focal points.

Another thing that makes the focal point pop out is to create a high value contrast. The best way

PRO TIP Clipping Mask

Clipping Masks are something which I use very often. For example in this case I use them to add extra roots towards the end of the process. First I paint in a black shape (although the color doesn't matter) which will be the silhouette of the roots. Then I copy another part of the painting which I will use as a texture for the shape. I make this texture a Clipping Mask to the shape and transform it to make it fit properly. I add a Levels adjustment layer (also as a Clipping Mask) to fix the values and then all it needs is a bit of extra brushwork to fix the mistakes.



to check the contrast in your image is to make it black and white. An easy way you can set this up is by going to View > Proof Setup > Custom. In this window put “Device to Simulate” to “Dot Gain 20%” and press OK. Now whenever you want to switch between black and white and color just press Ctrl+Y.

10 Finishing touches: Now it's time for the finishing touches. The bottom-right of the image feels a bit empty so I'm going to add some more vines there.

The generator kind of blends together with the vines wrapping around it, so I'm adding some vertical lights to it to separate the two elements a bit better. For some scale indication I am also adding a bunch of birds which also gives the viewer more to look at.

Now I create some light beams and use a Levels adjustment layer to make the corners a bit darker. With a slight Color Balance the scene is nearly done! Something I always do when I have finished with a piece is copy the entire thing (Ctrl+A to select everything, Ctrl+Shift+C to copy everything visible in the file) and then paste it on a new layer by using Ctrl+V. I then do a final Mixer Brush session to take care of any unnecessary hard edges and noise. ●

08 The Lighten layer pushes the background back and adds a nice saturated color to the image

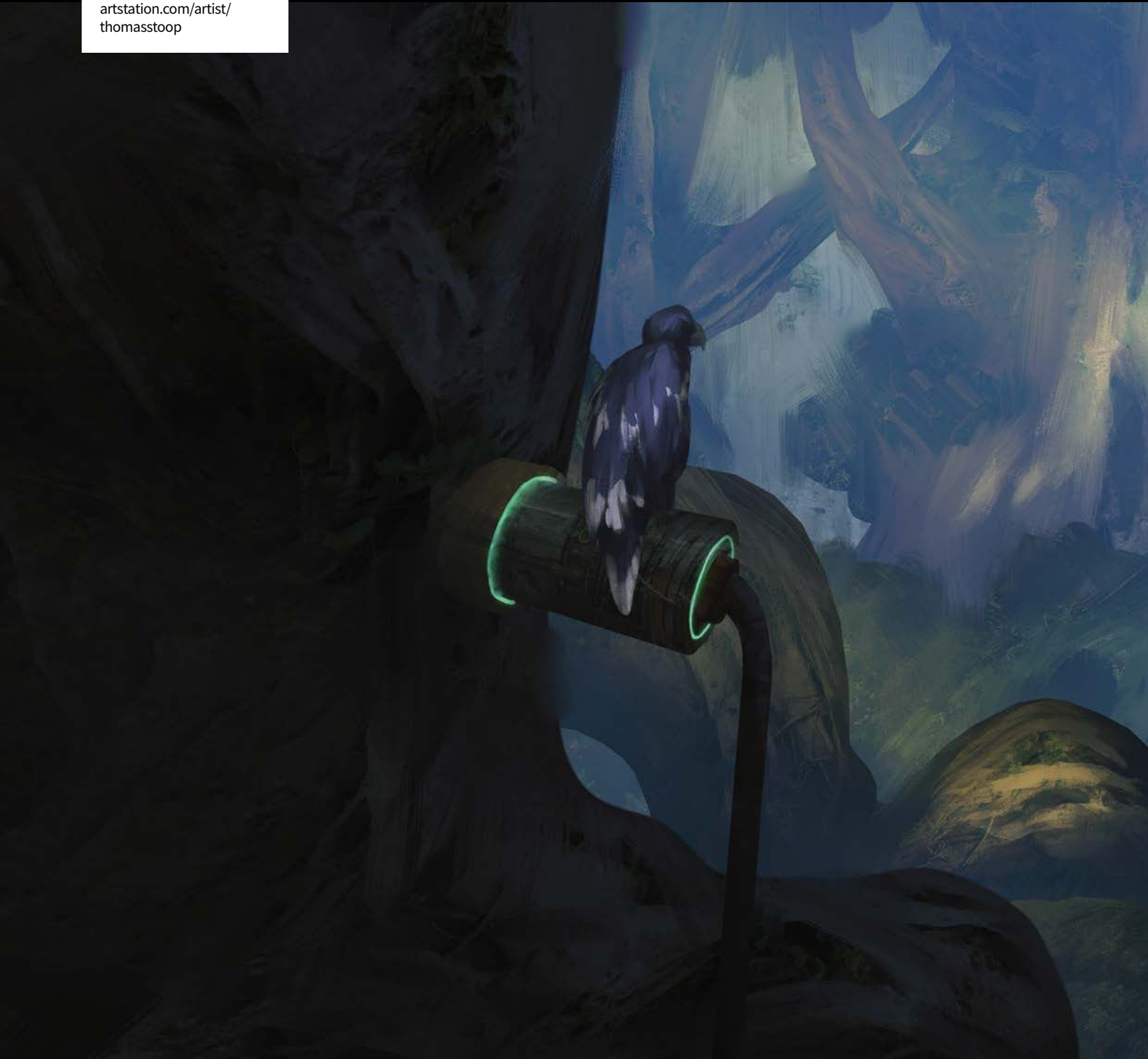
09 Create a glowing orb using the Smart Object tool

The Artist



Thomas Stoop

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“These tutorials not only provide interesting exercises for the beginner to help build a strong foundation for drawing and painting, but also provide important insights into the mindset of a concept artist. Very useful and inspiring!”

Lois Van Baarle (aka Loish)

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The Artist



Juan Novelletto

novelletto.com.ar

Software Used:
Photoshop

Juan Novelletto is a senior concept artist and illustrator based in Buenos Aires, Argentina. He works for NGD studios and is also art director at the indie games studio Nastycloud.

Using values in sci-fi art

Refine your sci-fi illustrations with this guide to using values by Juan Novelletto ▶





Create points of interest using contrasting values...

Hello! I hope that you liked the previous tutorials! In the last one we continued with our sci-fi scene, exploring perspective, changing the angle of the camera, and used a 3D program (SketchUp) to create a sketch with correct perspective and many elements, including characters, in a fast way. In the current tutorial I will continue with the same image, but I will show you how to correct values and add more information, to continue to reinforce the idea. To do this I will pass the sketch to black and white, to appreciate in an optimal manner the values of the scene.

When we see an image in grayscale, we are seeing the value of colors that compose it.

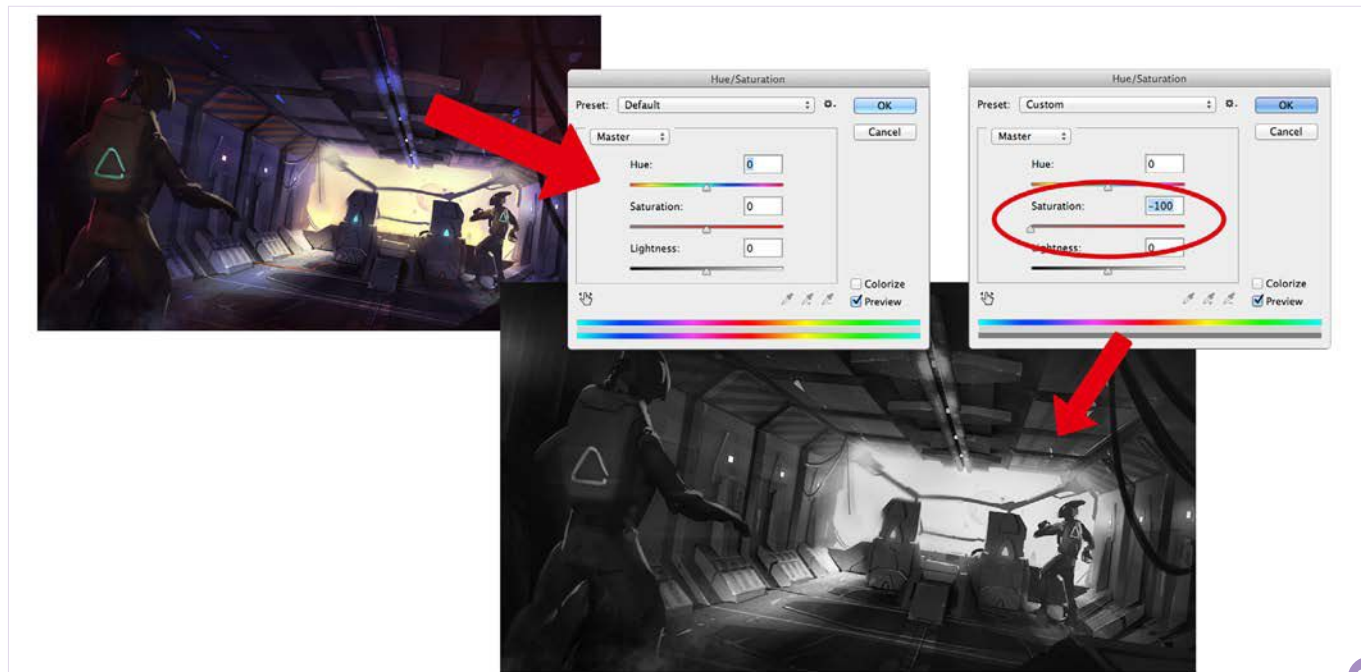
The value can be darker or lighter, depending on the amount of black or white. If you recall, in the tutorial on composition (issue 120), we saw that values are very important to the composition part of the painting process, since we can guide the gaze of the viewer using light values in spaces of dark values, by contrast for example. In addition to working the values, in this tutorial I will also add more detail to the image, so that it is more polished and closer to what I want the final image to be, with much more detail and information. But the first thing I do here is a synthesis of the image in three values – let's get to work!

01 Desaturate the image: The first thing I do is return to the final image of the last tutorial. This image was a sketch, where I showed you ways to use perspective, angles of camera,

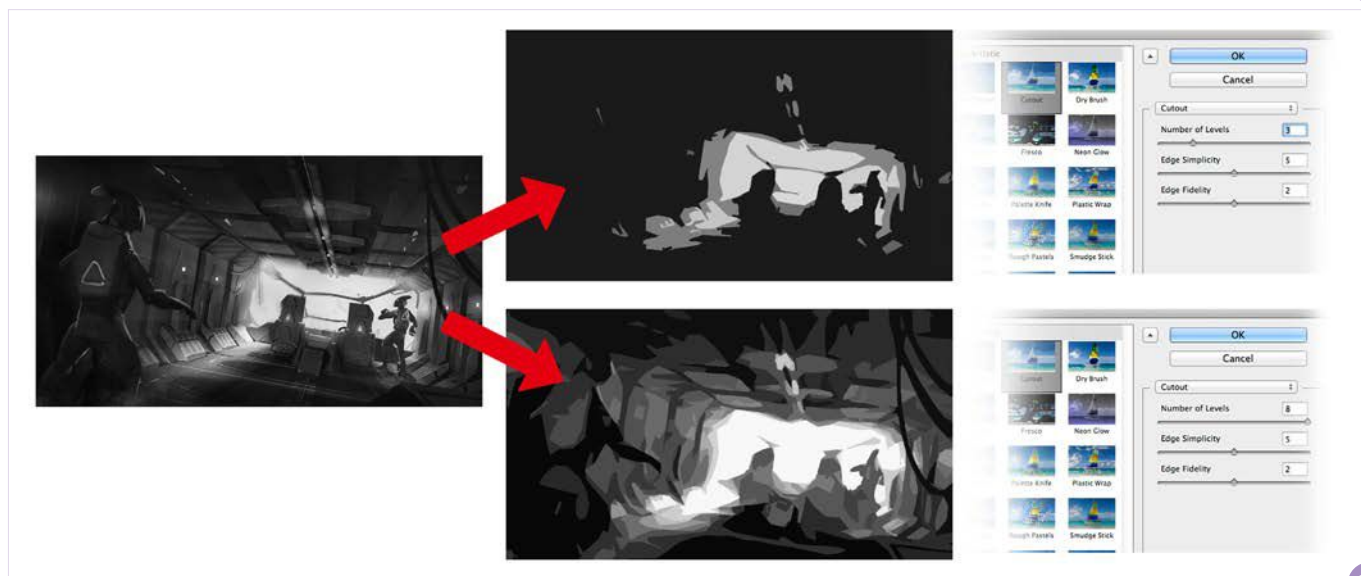
and 3D software to accelerate your work process. However, I now need to make adjustments to the values on the image. So what I do is to pass the image in to values, which is not the same as passing it to black and white in Photoshop.

The correct way to pass an image into values is with the menu that we find in Image > Adjustments > Hue/Saturation. With this menu opened, in the Saturation option, I move the slider completely to the left, so I have my desaturated image, and we can see that the information's clarity and the darkness of the color is the only thing visible.

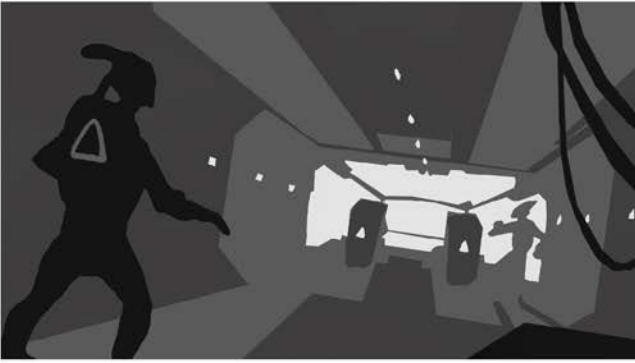
As a warning, remember this process is not reversible; if you don't retain a copy, you will lose the color information. In this case I don't care as the color will be resumed in the next tutorial.



01



02



03

02 Checking values: I already have the desaturated image so now what I am going to do is check the values depending on the composition. There are some tricks to doing this quickly, for example a Photoshop filter. In the Filter menu, I choose the option Filter Gallery. This opens the Filter Gallery in Photoshop, which I recommend you explore (but don't abuse it!) because it can be very useful.

The filter that I choose is the Cutout which can be found by going to Filter > Artistic > Cutout. What this filter will do is separate the image into flat colors (in this case values, since I have rid the image of the colors), and assign them to average areas. This means that if an area is particularly dark, it is going to paint it in a dark value.

The Cutout filter has three sliders, and the one which interests me the most for this step is the first one "Number of Levels". If you move this slider you will see how the variety of grays increases. However what I want to see is the end result of choosing three levels, and this result is that the image is dominated by the darkness and the focus is on the display of the ship, which is illuminated. This is a decision of composition that I am going to change a bit in the following steps, to give more importance to the character closest to the camera.

03 Composition: As I demonstrated in the first tutorial on composition, a quick and simple way to boost an image is by making small thumbnails of compositions in three values. Now let's return to that. What I am going to do is very simple; I pass back the desaturated image in to three values and slightly change the composition just by touching the values.

The first thing I do now is to separate the elements that compose the scene in values, leaving three great elements: the character closest to the camera, the ship and the window. With this synthesized information, I can see the composition even, and move on to modify it. I duplicate all these layers and paint over new



PAINTED WITH A SOFT BRUSH

04

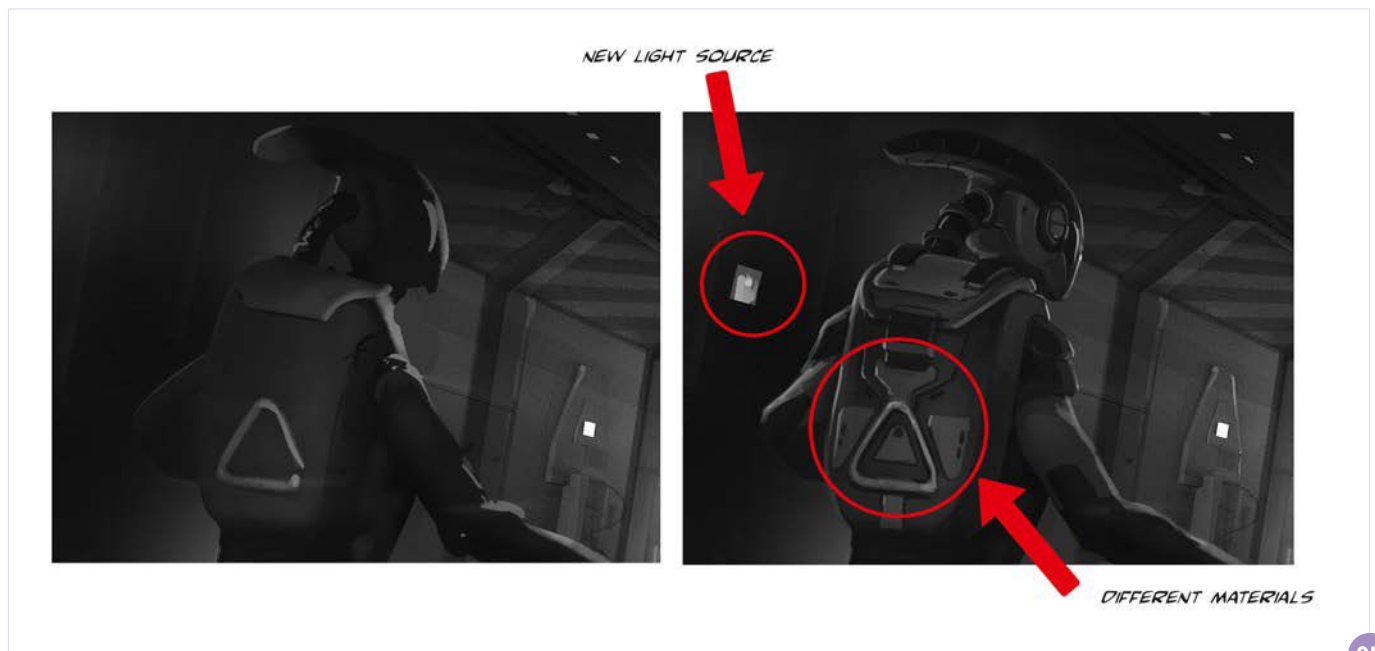
elements and lights to give more relevance to the close character, and in doing so make him gain more prominence in the scene. In addition, having a more enlightened scene will give you more detail and thus reinforce the image.

After adding these lights I break the scheme of three values and add a diffuse light coming from the window with a Soft brush, and another near the character. These are simple effects that in the next tutorial we will see with more detail.

04 Separate shapes: I start with the character that is closer to the viewer, who is now going to get so important that they are almost the protagonist of the image. As the character has so much importance it is vital that it has detail and also that it is visible. The first thing I do is to detach it from the darkness. An

interesting way to do this is to make contrasts through values; this means that I will give opposing values to the background and to the figure. With a Lasso selection I mask the silhouette of our character, and then invert the selection. ▶

- 01** With a desaturated image it is easier to see the focal points of an image
- 02** The Cutout filter is especially useful for analyzing the composition in a fast way
- 03** Adding lights help the figures stand out in the darkness, and increase the level of detail
- 04** Using masks accelerates your workflow and also helps to keep work clean



05

“An important point to remember is that the closer to the camera an element is, the greater the contrast is”

This is something I am going to do again and again, so I recommend you use the keyboard shortcuts: reverse selection is Ctrl+I, or on a Mac it is Cmd+I. Something I do to work comfortably with the selection is to hide it: to do so you use the shortcut Ctrl+H. After this, use a Soft brush to paint the dark with a lighter value, very gently, just to make the character stand out.

05 **Detailing the character:** I continue detailing the character. A fundamental job is to separate the materials, to break with the uniformity, and also give wealth and design to the costume, for example. There are many ways to identify one material from another. For example one is to give a distinct value, clearer or darker, and by contrast achieve a differentiation. In addition, you can add a texture or a different brightness, to make it more opaque or more glazed. To generate these new materials, I recommend that you take a look at examples of different materials from reality, and works of other artists.

I also add a new source of light, only a very small amount so that it generates a rim light, that accentuates the figure even more, and also to generate small highlights that will strengthen the different materials. This process can take all the time you want, since the level of detail that you want to give is your decision. If you remember the composition tutorial, the things which attract our gaze more are those with the most detail.



06



DIFFERENT MATERIALS

07

“If the whole environment has the same level of detail, the view is lost and a visual chaos would be left”

06 **Final details to the character:** I continue polishing the character, because as stated above, as a relevant element of the scene it must have sufficient detail to attract the gaze of the viewer. I add some more rebound lights caused by the new source of light, and I still separate the materials with values, in order to generate variety.

Some materials are also shinier than others, so they will have greater clarity in their values. An important point to remember is that the closer to the camera an element is, the greater the contrast is. Although the character is now detailed almost evenly, I decide to leave the leg simple as it is always more interesting if the figure is not completely covered.

07 **First details to the environment:** While the environment is not an essential part of this composition in terms of detail, since the action is not there, you can give it a little more importance and wealth if you work its elements. The level of detail in the environment should be less than the character has, since they have different weights. If the whole environment has the same level of detail, the view is lost and a visual chaos would be left. This is a very common error that I see on many artworks where the entire piece has been detailed and has not focused only on what is important.

I continue detailing the chairs, which occupy an important place in the composition. Keep in mind what I said in the previous step, the

PRO TIP Value studies

A good practice for understanding composition in painting is to study the values of a classical painting. The best way in which you can do this is by copying the image in the form of a thumbnail using only the values. More importantly, do this without desaturating the original image and thus you will learn to understand the values of your colors. The more that you repeat this task, the better you are going to understand composition and values. Remember that this is a practice and you should not expect them to be as good as pieces for your portfolio, but use them to help you to understand how to use values for your future composition.



contrast level decreases as elements move away. This means that you will see less black and differences between values, with a tendency to blend themselves. For this reason it is important that you work the materiality so that it does not become a uniform patch.

08 **New elements:** Let's move on with the interior of the ship. As I previously did with the character, I will start to separate the elements that make up the ship with values. ►

05 The character is taking shape and becomes more polished, gaining importance in the composition

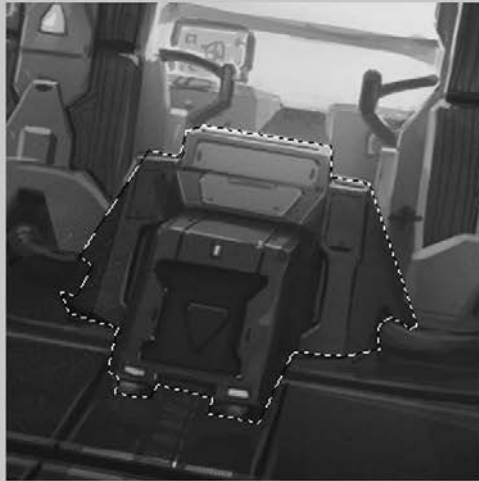
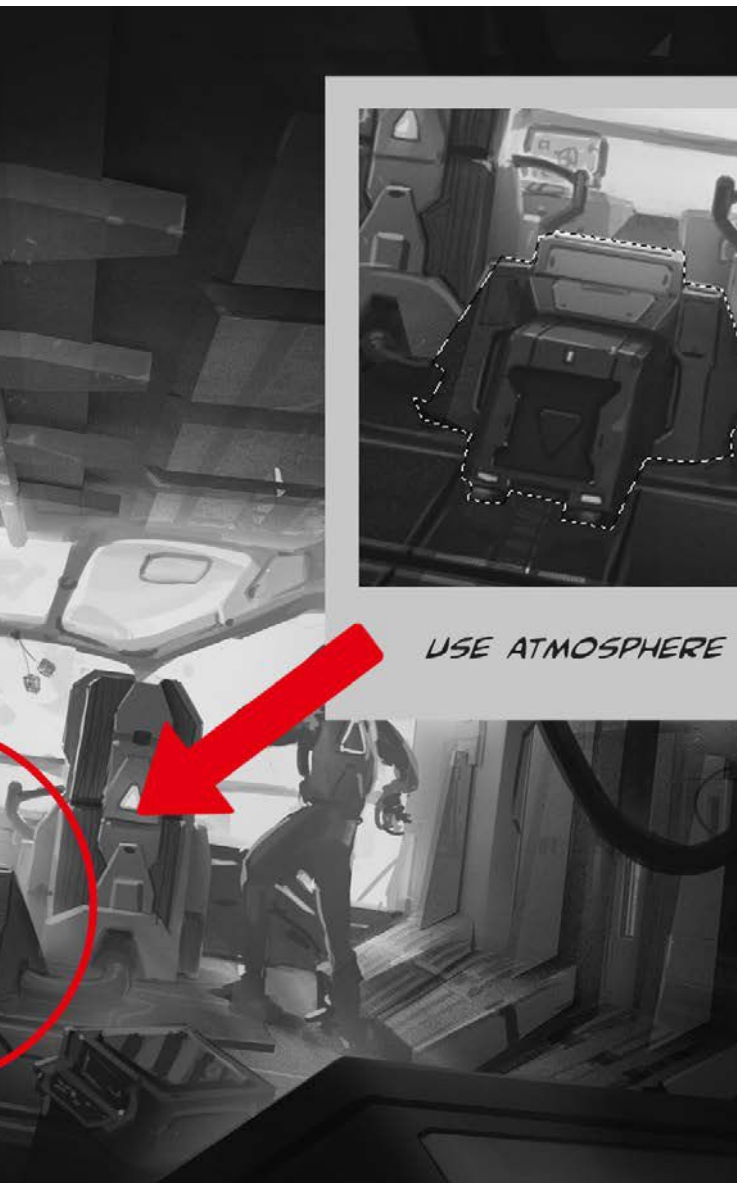
06 The character with final details, showing the suit almost completely

07 The difference of values helps to create visual richness, breaking uniformity



09

ELEMENTS WITH DARK VALUES TO CONTRAST WITH THE MAIN LIGHT



USE ATMOSPHERE TO BRING ELEMENTS TO THE FRONT

08

“For the rule of thirds in composition, I had to place the important elements at the intersections of the lines”

wires that are going to work in the same way as the loose straps. In a very suggestive way I finally paint in the window of the ship – our main source of light. With the lightest value of the image I paint a circular shape, which may be a whole planet or our old friend, the strange object. The idea of this is also that by not having too much clarity in the image, uniform zones do not get formed.

The technique is the same; masking an object and then inverting the selection to paint with a Soft brush. It is important not to abuse this technique because what you will generate will eventually look like a field full of smoke. The example you can see in the image is the central part located between both pilot chairs. In addition to continuing to detail the scene I add some elements that help with the storytelling of the image. With a couple of boxes, I give the idea that the movement of the ship is dropping them, and they are free-falling to the ground. To make them more visible, again I mask them and separate them with a lighter color.

09 Final environment details: Our image is now almost ready. I continue with the other character and since this character is at a further distance, you don't need to give the same level of detail the closer one has. I use the first character for reference to suggest elements that make up his costume. Remember that you don't need to have an extreme level of rendering; a couple of spots and lines are okay instead. The human eye tends to fill in the missing information, and in this case uses the more detailed character.

I then add the straps that hold the boxes, and give them a dark value for contrast with the light coming from the window. I also add some loose

10 Final image: Before adding more final details to the entire composition, I will give even more relevance to the character and give the composition a better location. If you remember the first tutorial, for the rule of thirds in composition, I had to place the important elements at the intersections of the lines, and that is what I do with this character.

In addition, I scale the image and bring it closer to the camera, also making it darker. Once this is done, the composition gets reinforced with two large points of focus; the character and his own gaze, which is the window of the ship.

The last effects consist of particles, beams of light, and some highlights. Finally, in a new layer with the blend mode set in Overlay, I darken the less important areas and I illuminate the most relevant. Well, this is it; I hope that this tutorial has served to teach you more about values. ●

08 Subtle elements appear to reinforce the idea that the ship is in trouble

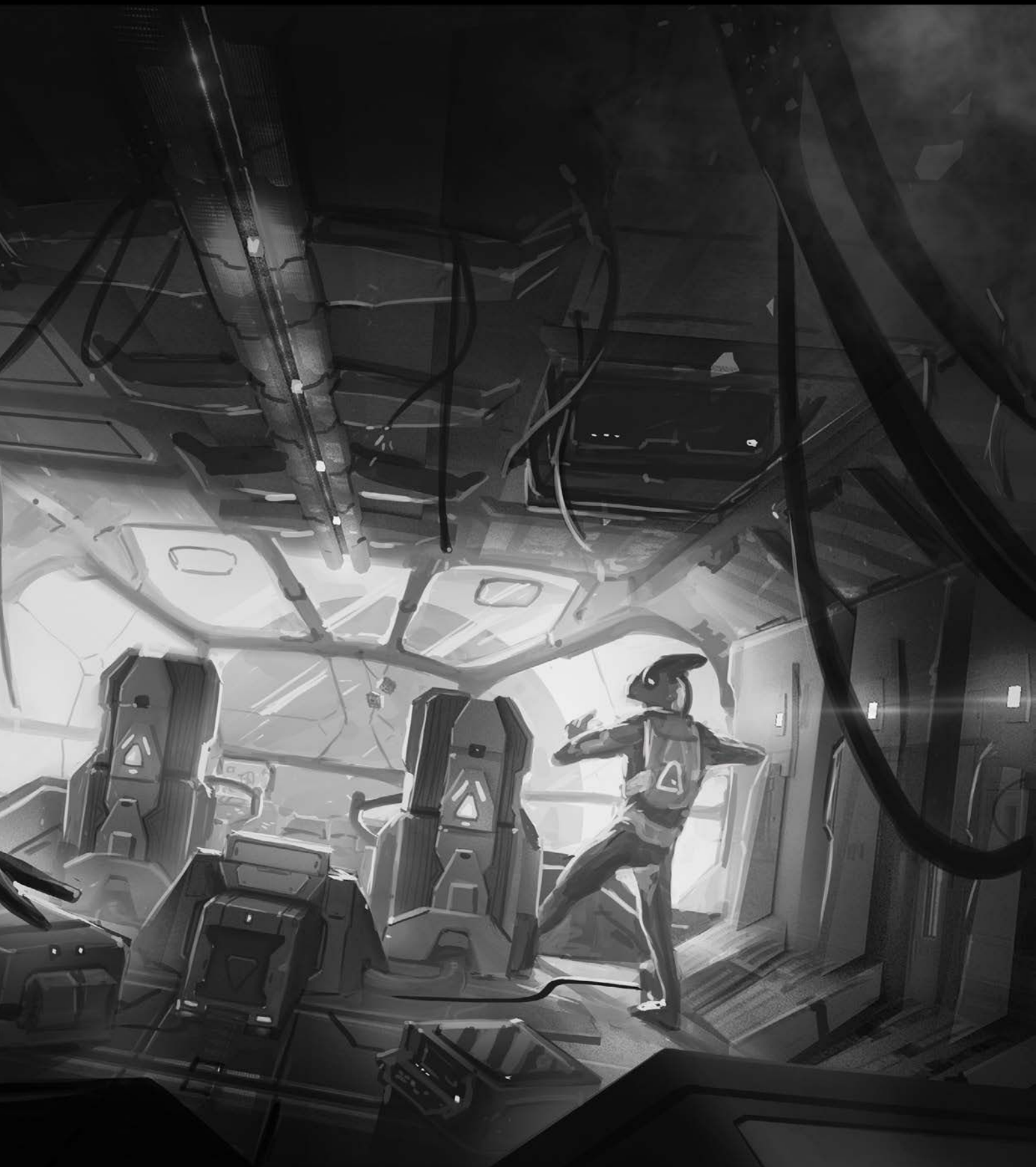
09 Dark value elements provide contrasts

The Artist



Juan Novelletto
novelletto.com.ar





The Artist



Sung Choi

sung-choi.com

Software Used:
Photoshop

Sung Choi (Sunghun Choi) is an award-winning concept artist from South Korea currently working at Bungie in Washington. He specializes in world design and illustration for the entertainment industry.

Quickly create a fantasy scene

Sung Choi shows how he quickly paints a fantasy scene of a monkey king to test perspective and color in concepts [▶](#)





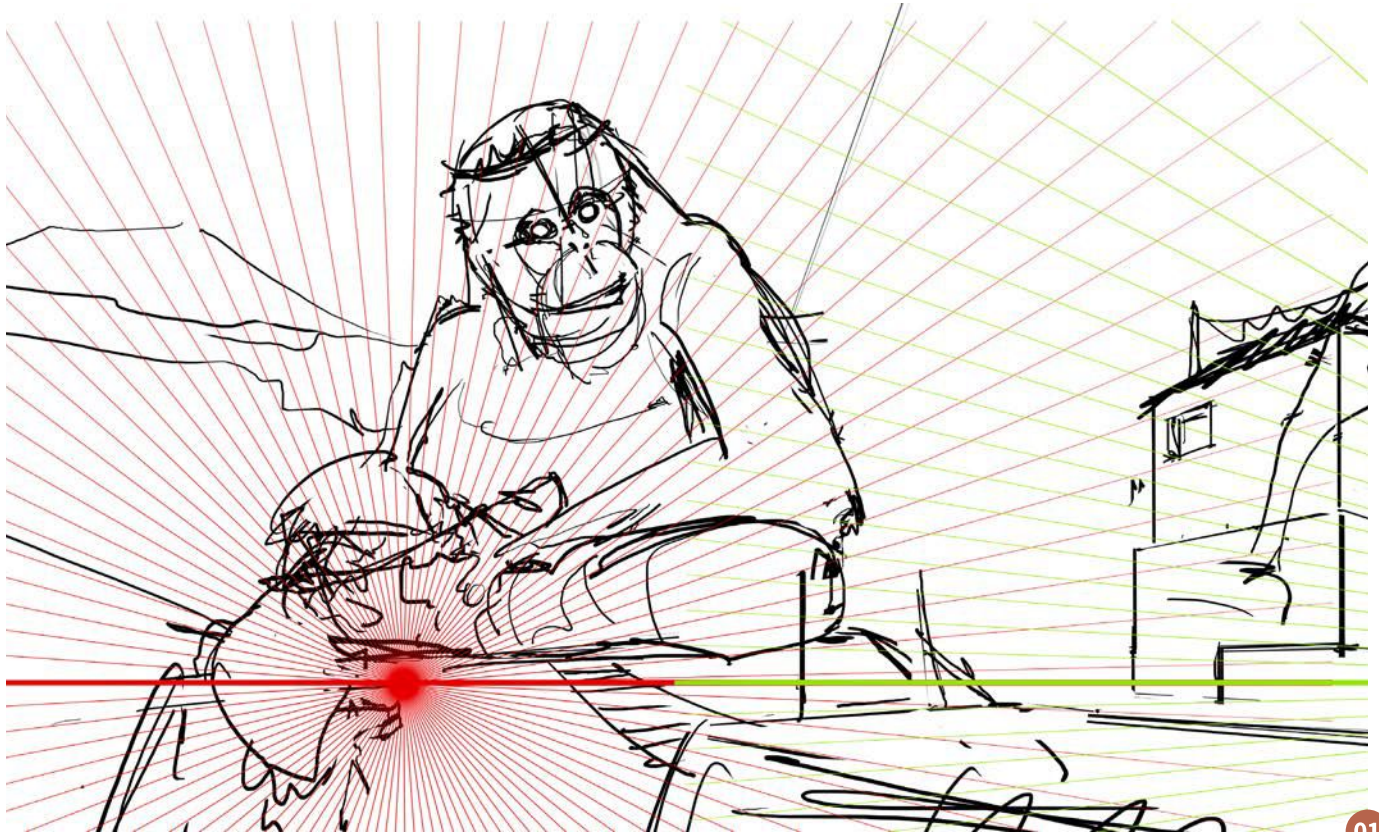
Speedily flesh out an idea for your next concept...

Getting an idea onto your canvas and making it meet your expectations can be a long and difficult process. Yet with a simplified approach you can quickly develop your idea and test out perspective, values and key colors before taking an image to completion.

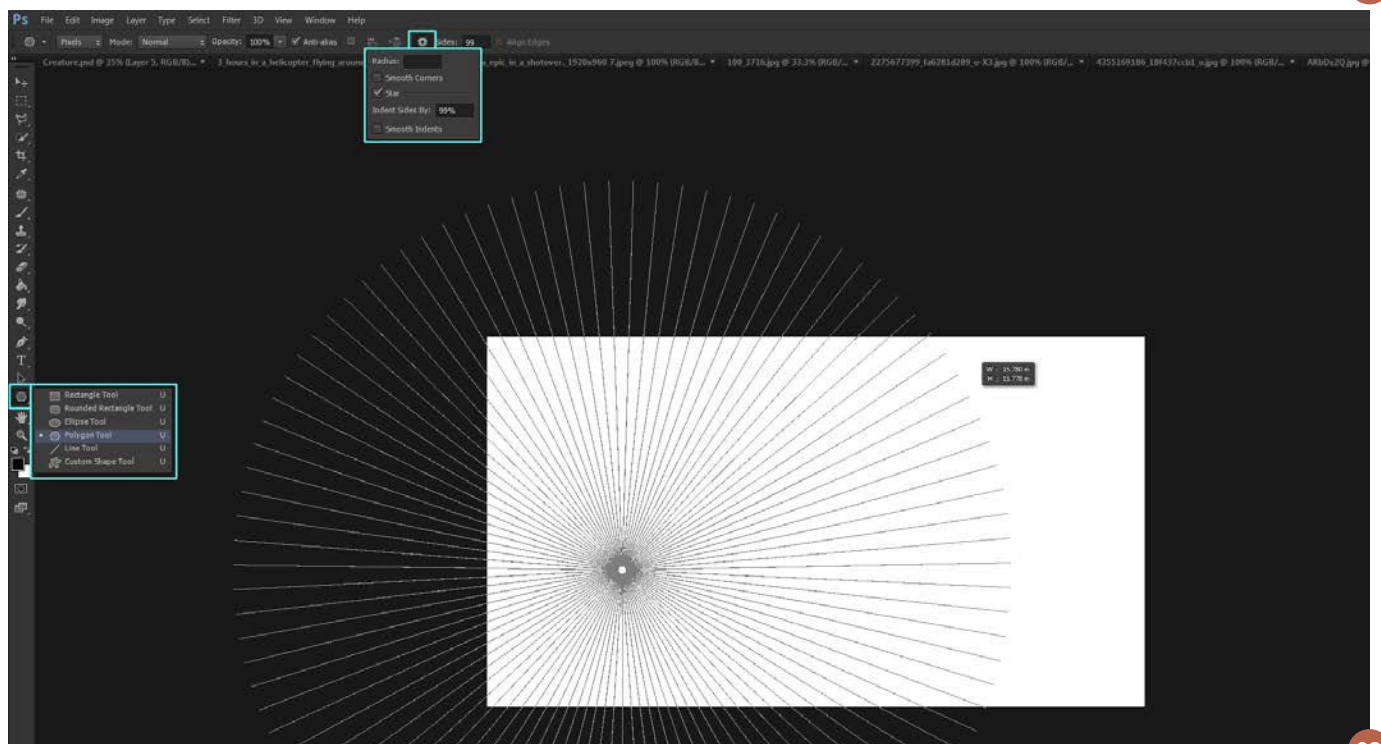
Whether you are new to using Photoshop or you just want to take some time to refresh your process, this tutorial will attempt to show you simple ways to quickly paint a fantasy scene. Using simple techniques such as perspective grids and photo texturing, Sung Choi demonstrates how you can create a fantasy scene of a monkey king in a mountainous environment, which you can use

to practice your painting skills and achieve great results quickly.

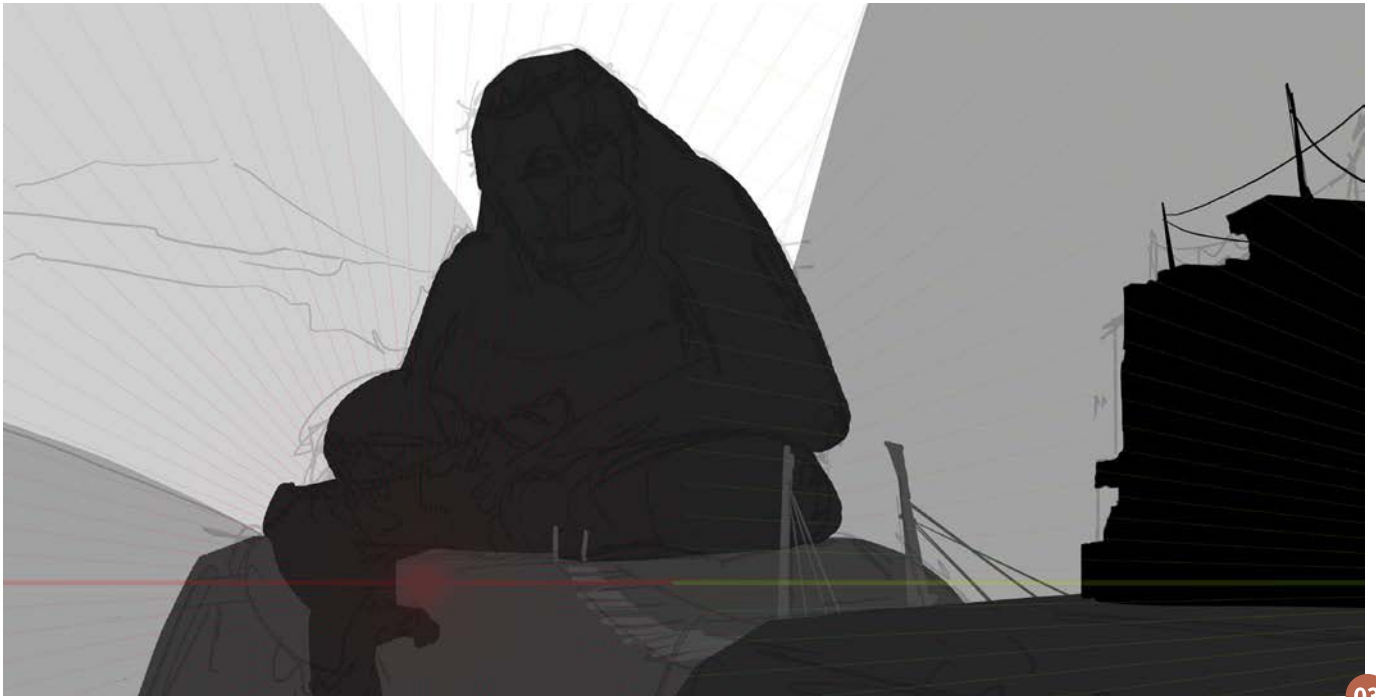
01 Perspective grid: The way to get a perspective grid for your image is pretty simple. First I pick the Polygon tool and change its settings to Star and put a ninety-nine percent indent on the sides. Once you have done this, if you click-drag the cursor, you will see that



01



02



03



04

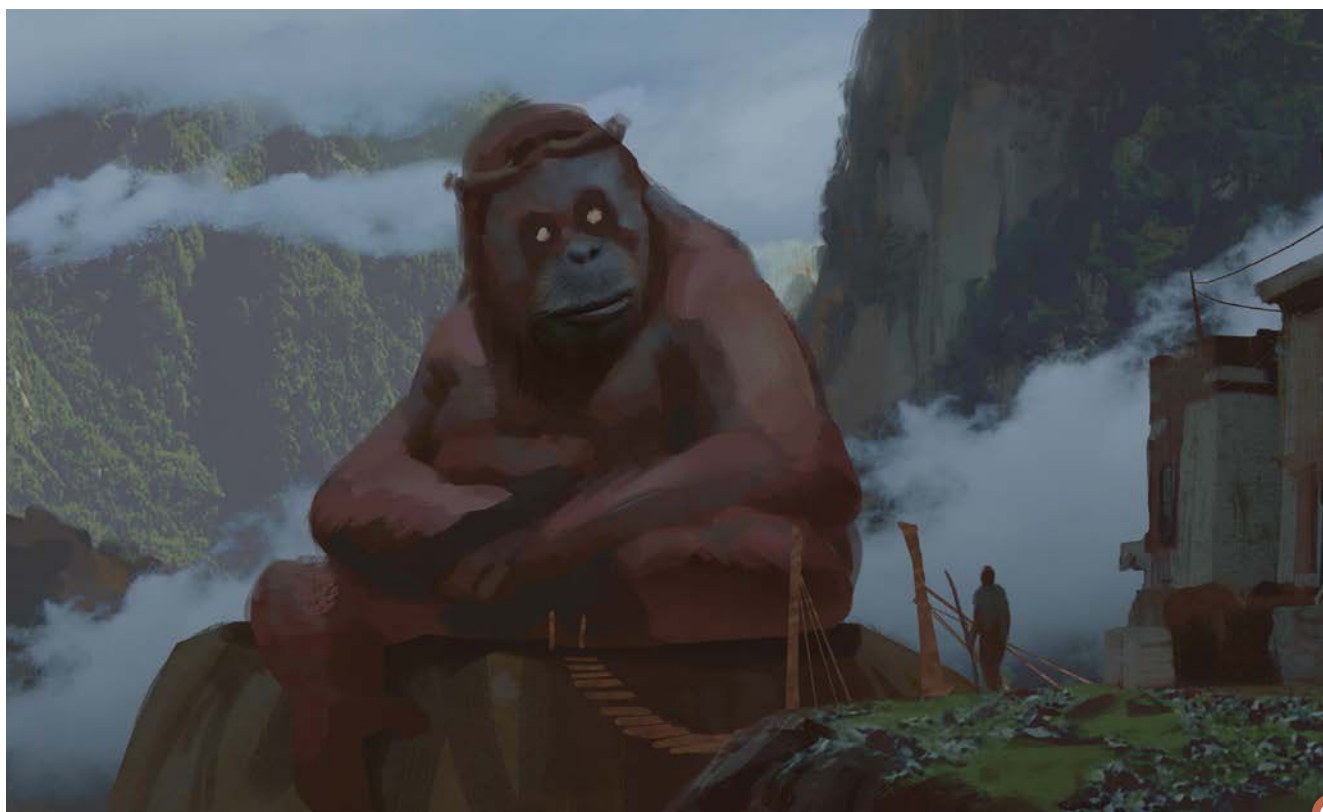
it creates radiant lines coming out from one vanishing point. You can use just one grid for one point perspective, or if you want to create an image with two or three points of perspective you can create more to suit your composition.

02 Quick sketch: Here I quickly sketch out my idea for a monkey king sitting on a mountainside. I put my perspective grid on top of layers using the method described in the first step. I like to use this grid when I have to draw lots of geometric shapes, but since the overall view of this image is going to be nature, I use it to help me mark out the buildings on the right side of the monkey king. In many cases, the use of 3D software helps me to get the right sense of depth, so I encourage everyone to try it if you can.

03 Silhouettes: After I have drawn out my line sketch, I like to block the silhouettes in separate layers. My layers for this image are separated by the mountains in the background and mid-ground, and the monkey king, building, and then foreground. At the same time I keep the perspective grid on top of all of these layers and keep the opacity low so that I can have the right silhouette for the building. My goal here in terms of composition is to clearly feature the monkey king using the highest contrast. The rest of the image will have relatively dark values so that I can keep the focus on the top-left third of the scene.

04 Add color: I start to add some color to the scene and tone down the whole image into a burnt umber brown color. Starting ►

- 01** Create a perspective grid by using the Star setting on the Polygon tool to make a vanishing point
- 02** Use the perspective grid when sketching to help you create any geometric shapes
- 03** Block out the silhouettes in separate layers to create a focal point in the image
- 04** Add some toned down colors while maintaining the values of the silhouettes





from this toned down color helps to develop a rich color as I paint above them. At the same time, I'm trying to keep the value ranges of each of the layers so that they won't end up being all the same values.

05 Local color: Here I am adding some local color on top of the toned color. Since I want to have a mood of a misty, overcast mountainside, the overall color needs to become cool. I am keeping watch on some photos of apes while I do this to help me understand their anatomy and posture. I also do this with some photos of mountains. Collecting good inspirational references and analyzing their essence is really important when you are working on a new concept or scene.

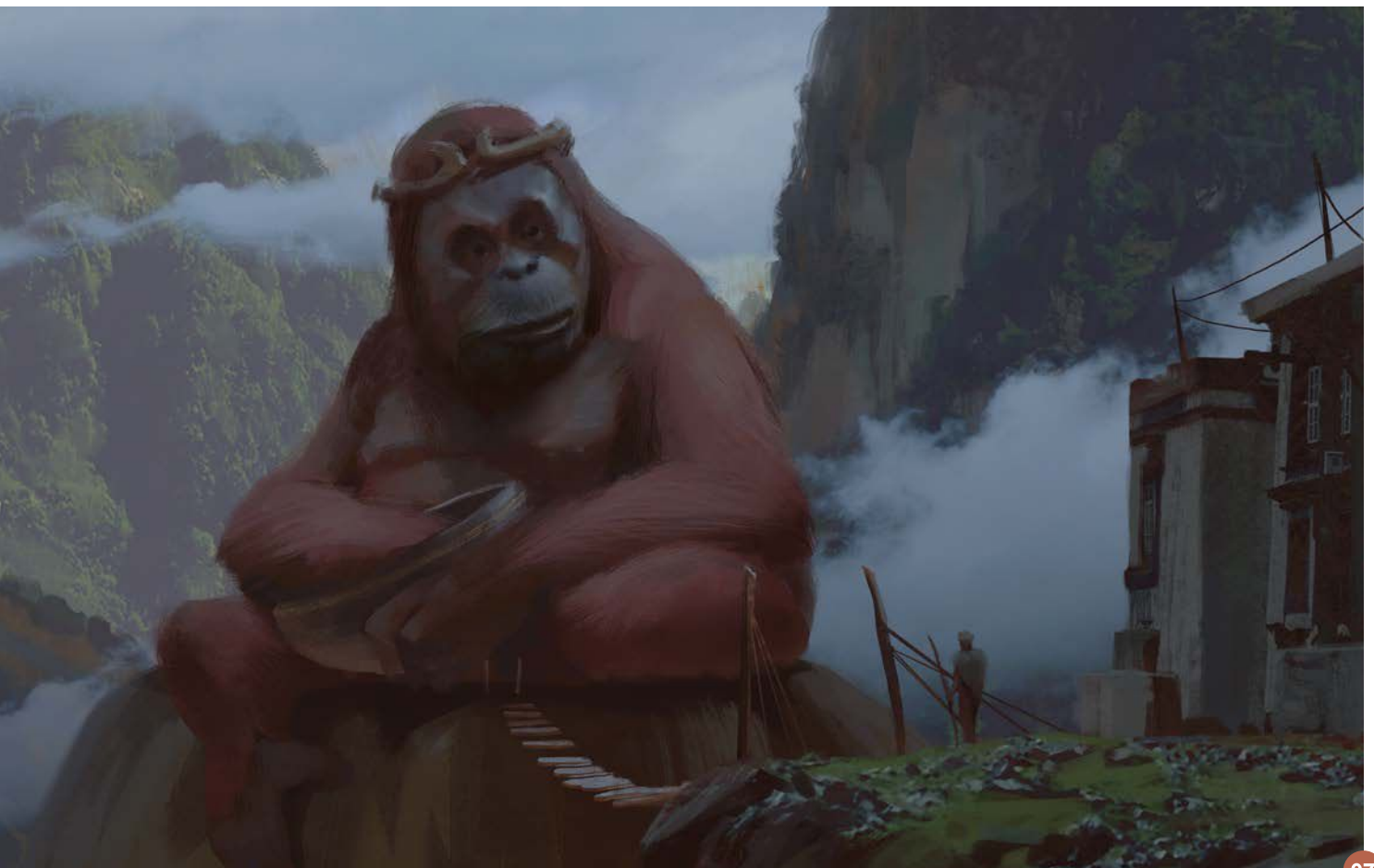
06 Photo textures: As I continue to paint the image, I think that it would be cool to have some thick misty clouds behind the monkey king. This will help me to silhouette the guy and the creature against the background. I also add some photos on to the mountain in the background but adjust it to fit in with the values and colors that I want. I use fewer photos for this than I normally work with since I want this piece to have a much more painted feel to it.

07 Ambient color: After I have got some more information in the scene from the photos, I continue to paint the image and constantly think about how the color and light works in this scene. Since it is an overcast environment, the ambient color of the scene should be cool, like a turquoise blue, and the shadows should look relatively warm. This quality of image provides a quick but great color stage before you get into more details and the finishing of a concept. ●

05 Add some local color to give the impression of a misty, overcast mountain

06 Paint in mist and use a few photos to texture the background of the image

07 Enhance the mood of the image by painting ambient color



The Artist



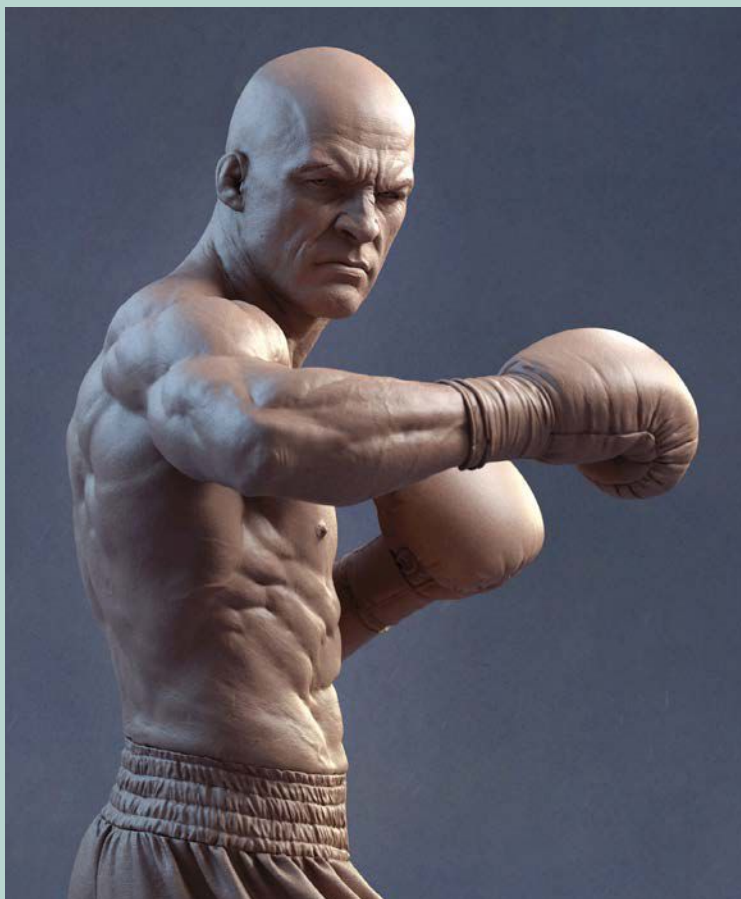
Sung Choi
sung-choi.com





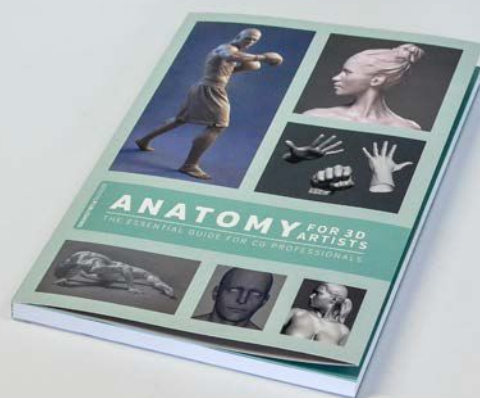
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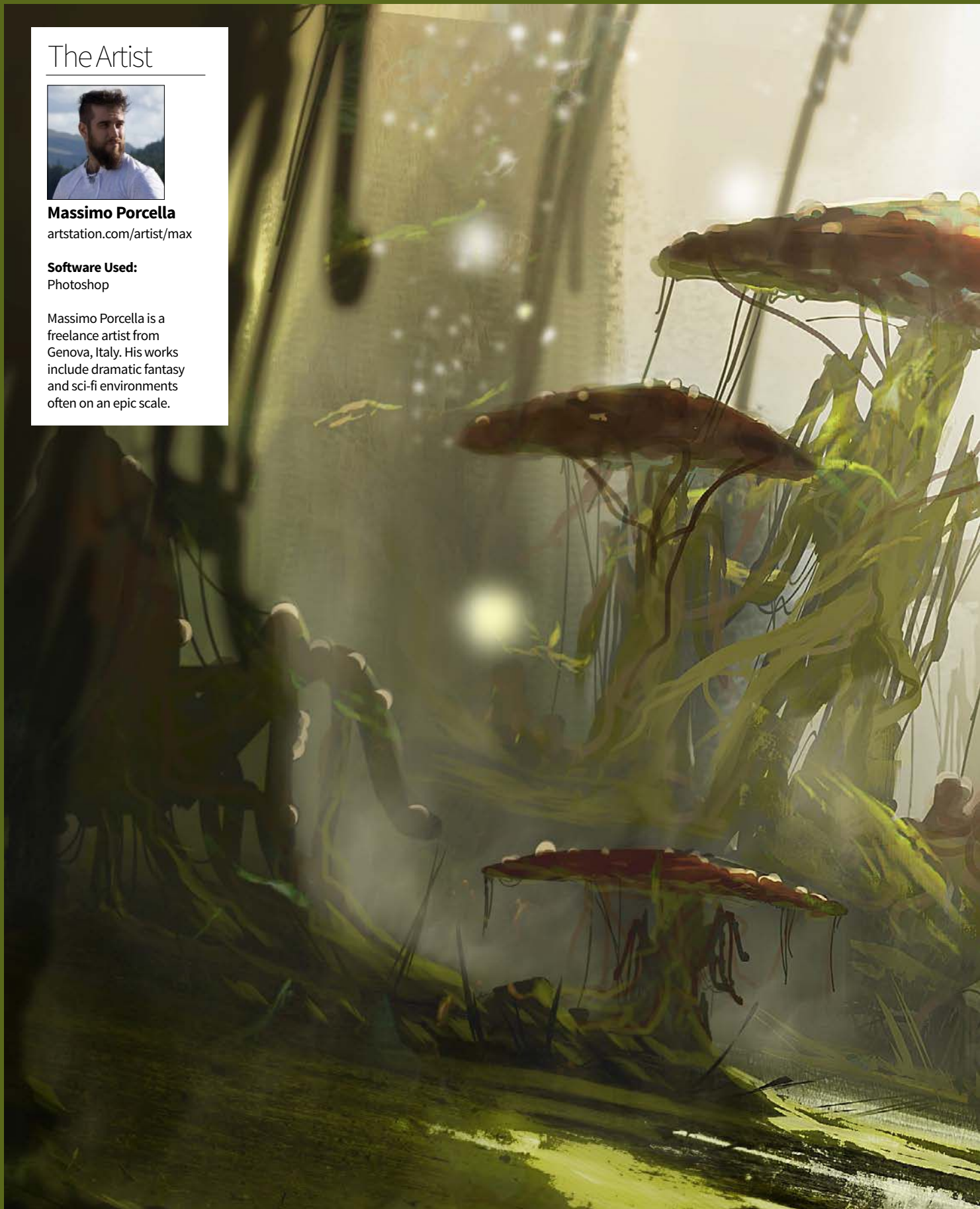
Massimo Porcella
artstation.com/artist/max

Software Used:
Photoshop

Massimo Porcella is a freelance artist from Genova, Italy. His works include dramatic fantasy and sci-fi environments often on an epic scale.

Speed painting a forest

Discover how Massimo Porcella painted his fantasy forest scene in only two hours and thirty minutes ▶





Get tips for creating a magical atmosphere quickly...

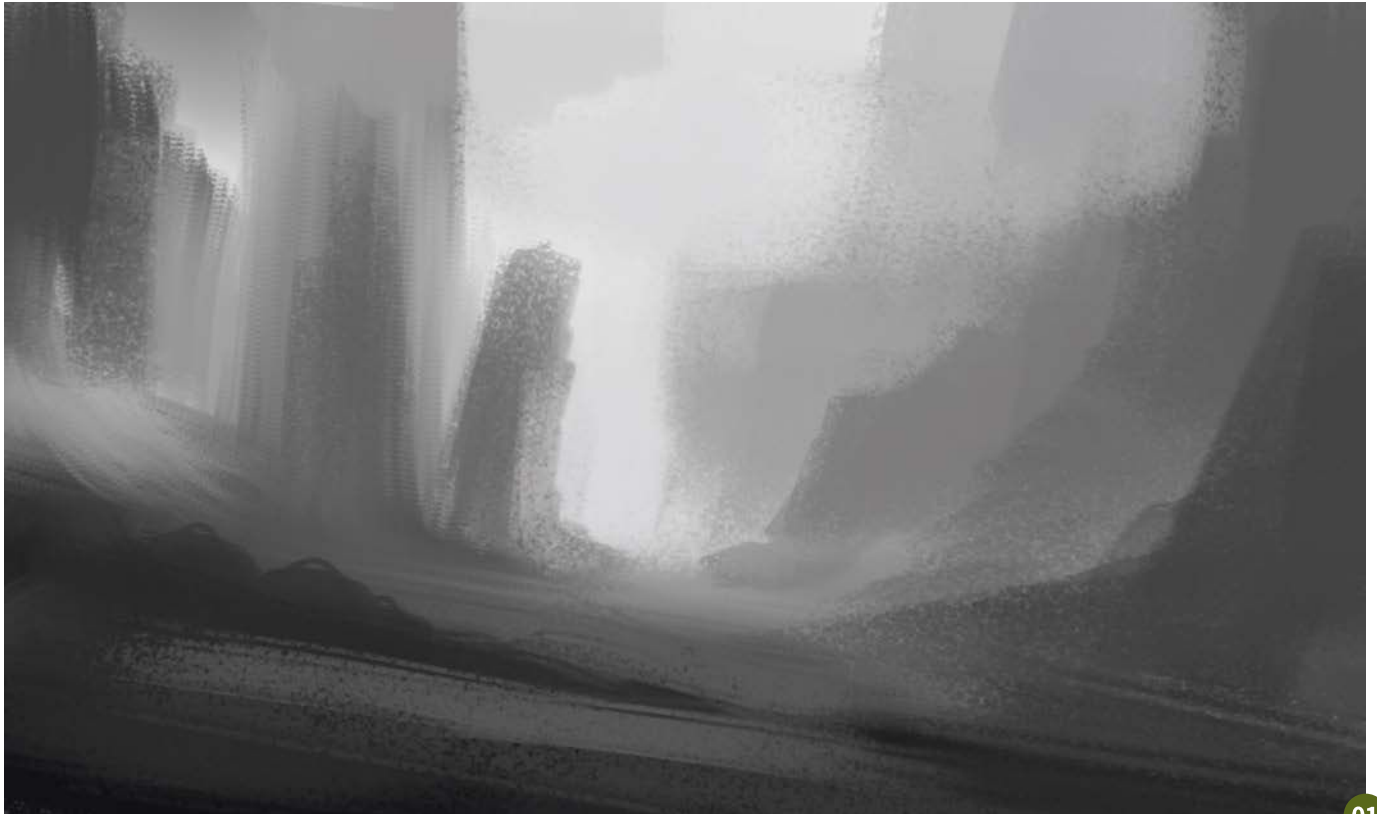
Hi everybody! I'm Massimo Porcella and I am a freelance concept artist at Untold Games, Foofa Studios, Milestone, iMasterArt production, and a concept and environment design tutor at iMasterArt.

In this tutorial I will show you how I quickly created, in only two hours and thirty minutes, a fantasy speed painting of an enchanted forest using shapes, texturing and color.

01 Ideas and sketching: I started sketching out ideas in Photoshop with a black and white color palette.

Once I had got a sense of the image that I wanted to create, and some tonal values for the scene, I started to give a structure to the idea with some quick sketching.

I began drawing the background first and then I worked on the middle-ground to arrive at what would become the base of my image.



01



02a

02 Shapes, contrast and light: I then built a quick organic shape and put it in to the composition repeatedly to give the image some structure and provide more balance to the overall scene. I created contrast in the image by taking down the mid-tones to blend the grays together using the Curves tool. This provided some more atmosphere for the scene.

I also added a light source to the scene to give it a general lighting direction which was important to

how the scene developed later on. I chose to light the scene from above, showing beams of natural light hitting the woodland floor.

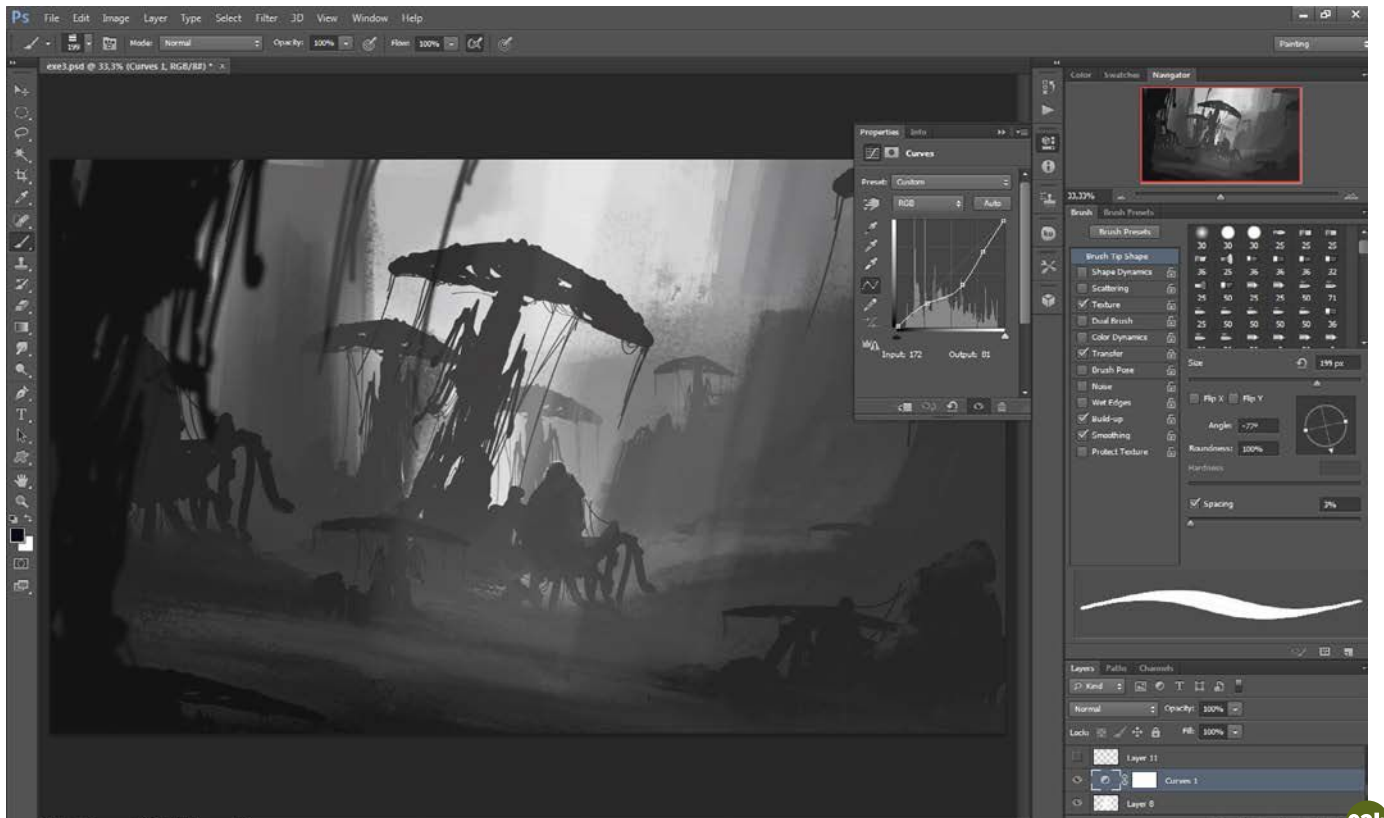
03 Texturing: Once I had finished drawing out the sketch, I then proceeded on to texturing the ground to make it look more like an organic landscape. This process helped me to make the image much more readable, and it also helped me to bring to life the structure of the shapes within the sketch. ►

01 Black and white tonal values were used to create a rough block sketch

02a An organic shape gave the scene more balance

02b The Curves tool was used to create contrasts in the scene

02c A light source was also added to the scene



02b



02c



03



04

I then used a photo texture on the forest's ground with the Photoshop blending mode set to Overlay. I used the Eraser tool to get rid of the borders that I did not need. This made the composition much more interesting and the light reflected from the water in the photo texture draws the viewer's eye to the center of the image.

04 Base color: Here I started looking for a base color that would work well in the scene. As tends to happen in traditional paintings, I started adding color by using the Gradient tool, and I played with Photoshop's blending modes, using Color, Soft Light, Overlay and any other mode I thought the image might need.

The one you choose for painting your own images will depend on the tonal values of your sketch.

I used a vibrant yellow-green color as the base color for this image as it quickly indicates the forest setting to the viewer, and gives the scene a positive atmosphere.



05



06

05 Painting: At this point I had all the main elements that I needed for completing the digital painting! With my usual Hard brush (Hard Edge), I started to color pick more colors for the scene I used these colors to change the tones which gave more depth and interest in the image.

For what I regarded as the rocks on the ground, I squashed the brush to give it the shape of a traditional putty knife. Then I followed the surface

of the rocks with the squashed brush so that I literally sculpted them with the color.

06 Mood: Now, again with the Hard Edge brush selected, I painted in some fog to give the scene a much greater sense of atmosphere. Using the fog in this way also helped me to separate the different planes of the image again, which helped to add a lot of depth to the overall scene. ▶

03 A photo texture made the image more readable

04 A green base color was added using the Gradient tool

05 The scene was sculpted using a Hard Edge brush and more color

06 Fog was painted in to create atmosphere then refined with the Eraser tool

With the Eraser tool I erased the borders of the fog to give it a more natural shape. I like to consider the Eraser as another brush; to me it is as if I am “draw erasing” rather than just removing parts of an image.

07 Character: I wanted to give the scene some more narrative, so I created the shape of a knight and used the tonal values of my scene to create this new character's volumes, helping to blend him into the scene. I finished him

by introducing the same light values onto him as are shown in the rest of the scene.

I then continued to work on the scene in general, and integrated the lower part of the knight with



07



08



09a



09b

“On a new layer I then used the Color Dodge setting. I did this as I wanted to create quick brushstrokes in order to paint light”

the ground. I blended everything together with a bit of Volumetric Particle effect between the character's legs and the ground.

08 Color Dodge and finalization: On a new layer, I then used the Color Dodge

setting. I did this because I wanted to create some quick brushstrokes in order to paint the light that would help me to give the scene a much clearer, fantasy atmosphere.

I also used some glows to give the impression of various plant spores floating around in the air. As a finishing touch, I decided to blur these spores to create an even more magical fantasy atmosphere.

At last, here we have the final image created in only two hours and thirty minutes! ●

07 A character was introduced to the scene near to the focal point

08 The new character was given the same volumes as the rest of the scene to blend in with the image

09a A Color Dodge was used to paint light, enhancing the fantasy theme

09b Finally floating spores gave a magical feel to the finished piece

The Artist



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Desolate

by Ian Jun Wei Chiew

See how the master concept artist created his image of a neglected seascape
Desolate in this sneak chapter from *Digital Art Masters: Volume 9* ▶



The Artist



Ian Jun Wei Chiew

ianchiew.com

Software Used:
Photoshop

Ian Jun Wei Chiew is a concept artist working in the film and gaming industry. He currently works for Sucker Punch Productions but also works as a freelance artist too.

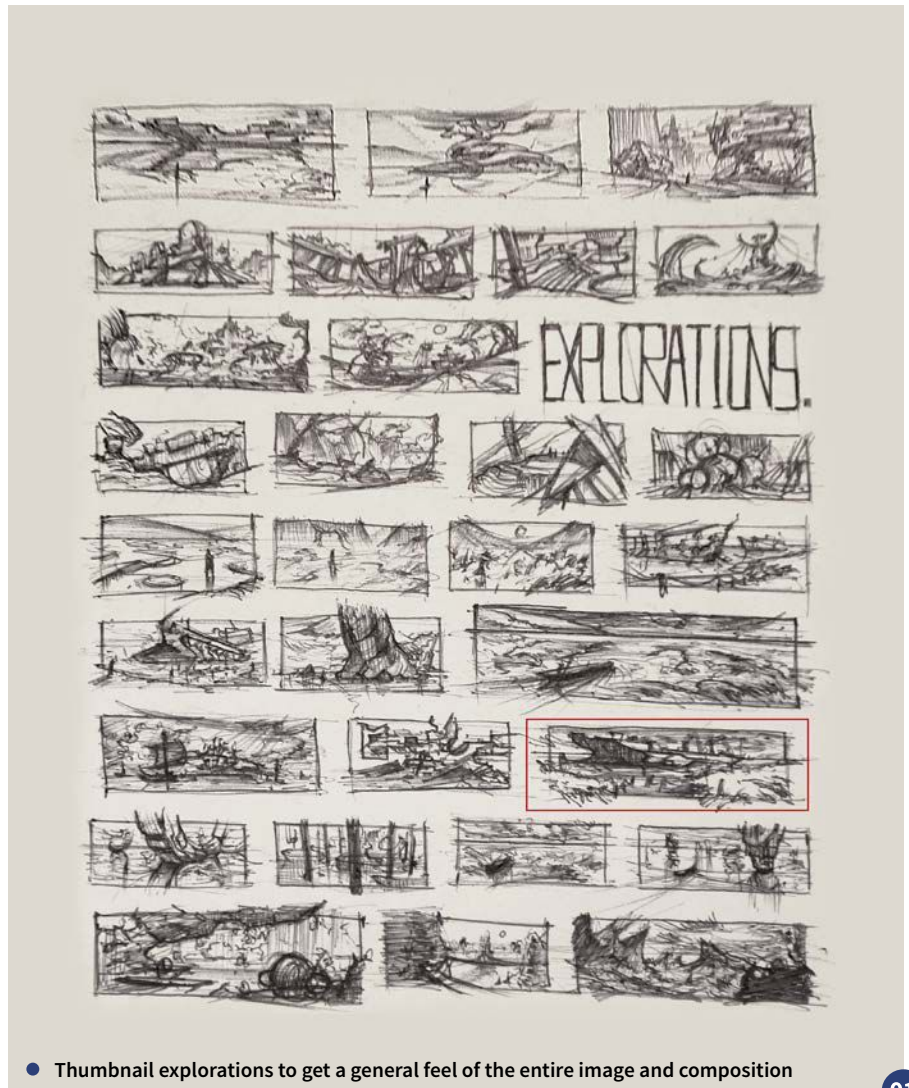
This painting came together through various personal experiences I have encountered in my life. Just before painting this, I was on a trip to a small island off the coast of Klang in Malaysia called Pulau Ketam. On the island, houses are built into the sea on long wooden stilts and are interspersed with lots of boats and fishermen. It was an excellent experience to witness daily life going on in this unusual environment. A real eye opener was the mass of pollution on the waters and shores with a huge amount of plastic bottles and trash, and that it seems as if the people there accepted this and continued with their lives.

Following these visual and emotional experiences, I decided to paint something with a gloomy and depressing mood. In this case, I decided to work on an image that speaks about global warming and littering caused by humans, and how this does not only affect the earth, but also the percentage of the population that this effects.

Sketch and research

I start off with thumbnail sketching to get an idea of how my final image will look. This is a phase where you can go crazy with your ideas and composition! Some of the sketches are far from my initial idea as I was also inspired to develop some ideas for other paintings too, so I just sketched them down for later (fig. 01a).

I generally prefer to sketch thumbnails traditionally because I find it a lot quicker to just put down an idea. Working in Photoshop I would be concerned with the type of brush, values, layers, zooming in and all the unimportant stuff that will slow down my design process. Just keep it simple and straightforward.



● Thumbnail explorations to get a general feel of the entire image and composition

01

Another thing to mention is that thumbnails are generally only for yourself. Not for the public or clients, so don't worry about making it presentable, it just has to make sense to you. I gravitated towards that particular sketch as it

has more of an ominous feeling that I really liked. I scanned that thumbnail in and brought it into Photoshop to work on top of. At this point, I also did some research, gathering a lot of references including the photos I took during my trip to

● Value sketch done a little more abstractly, keeping it loose and simple with the general composition still intact

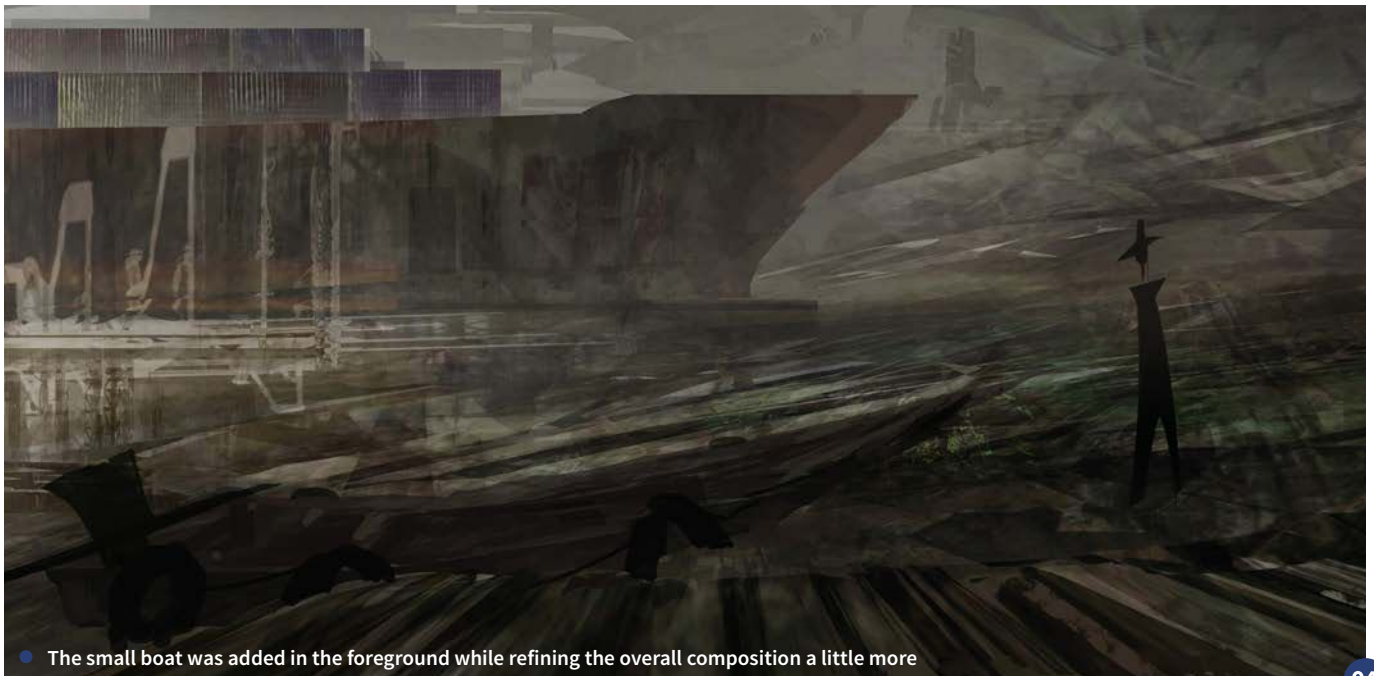


02



• Ian used color overlays to create the mood and feeling he wanted

03



• The small boat was added in the foreground while refining the overall composition a little more

04

Pulau Ketam. I put all the images together into one Photoshop document, saved it as a JPEG and opened it up on my second monitor.

I generally love starting with a more abstract approach; I find that this gives me a lot of room for new ideas and achieves those 'happy accidents'. I mainly think about the shape and values, while still keeping it loose and simple (fig. 01b). I used a lot of random brushes to create marks, the Lasso tool to fill in abstract shapes, as well as a lot of the Transform tool to warp and scale brush and shape marks to a position that caught my eye.

Composition and mood

Once I was happy with the overall shapes and values, I then started to refine the composition structure a little more, as well as introducing a

certain mood that I had in mind. In this case, I wanted to achieve a gloomy, depressing and ominous atmosphere.

I glazed the colors by using the Airbrush and Gradient tools on a new layer with various layer adjustments such as Overlay and Color (fig. 02a). I also used images I have in my personal library with a color palette that I liked, brought them into the document and played around with the opacity and adjustments to get the look I wanted.

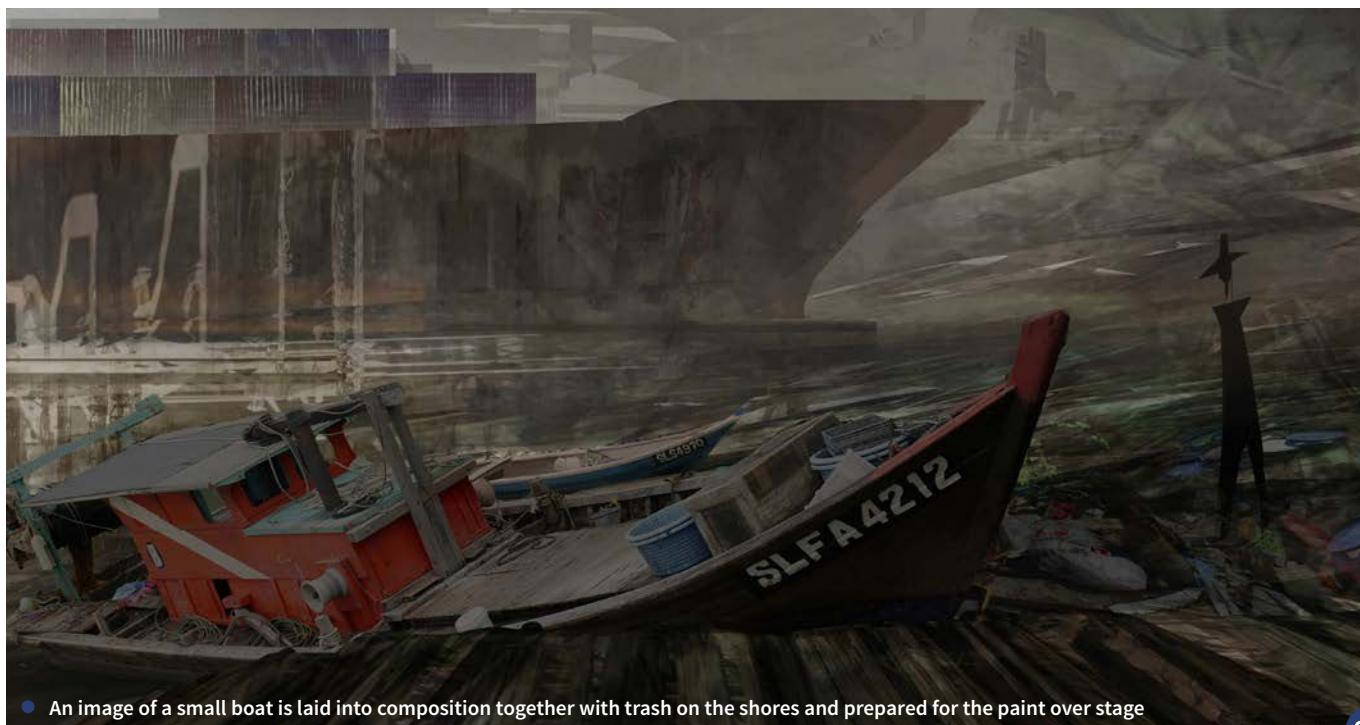
I start painting and blocking in both the small boat and the cargo ship off in the distance. After going back and forth experimenting with the shape and size for both elements, I finally landed on this one (fig. 02b). I wanted the figure to be in focus so I positioned the front end of both ships pointing in this direction, guiding the viewer's

eye towards the figure. I also added a slight curve on the front of the cargo ship to ease the eye movement a little further.

Photograph and texture elements

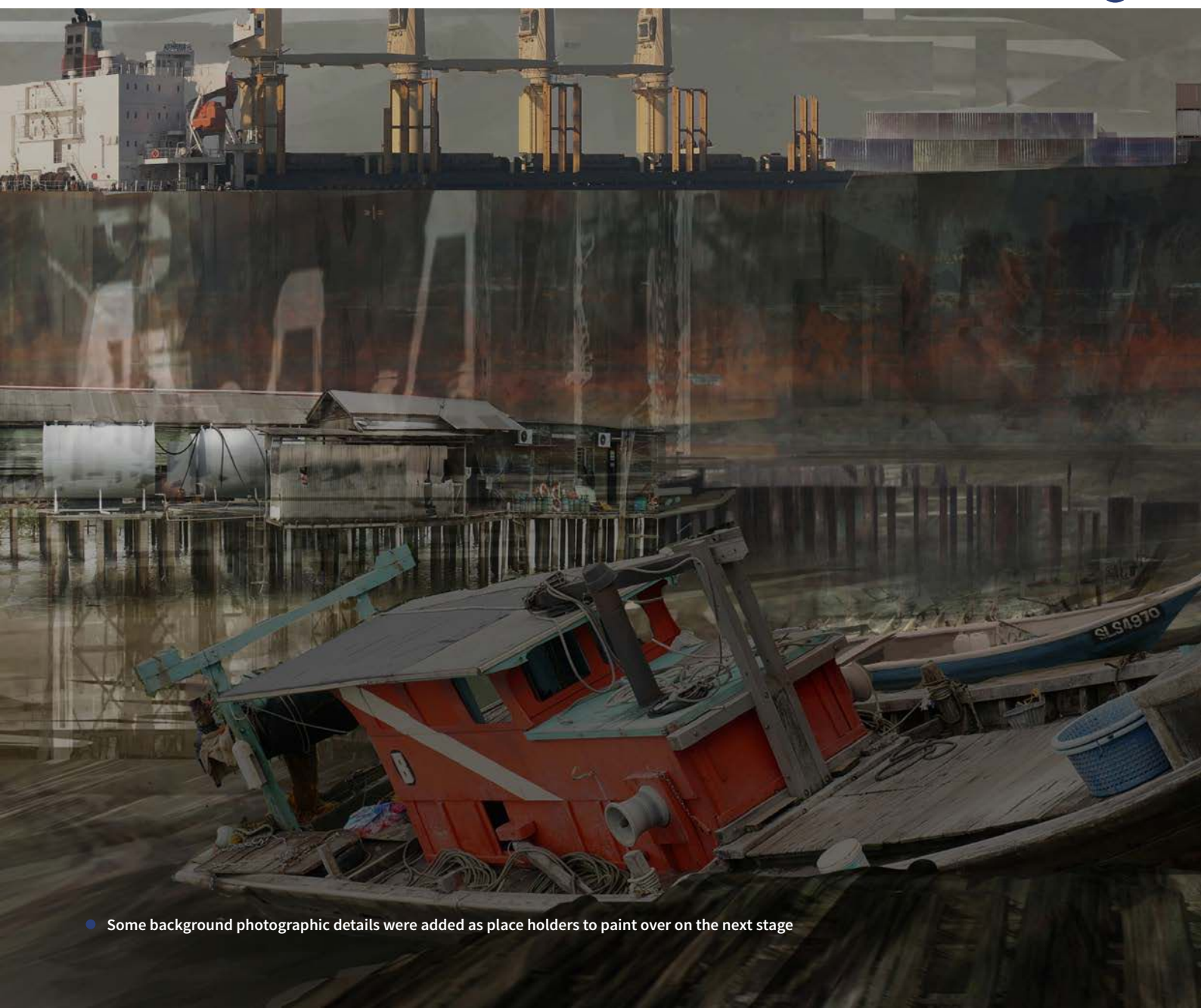
When the overall composition and mood was more or less what I had planned, I started to add some photographic elements to create a richer sense of detail without having to take a very long time painting them all individually.

The image of the small boat in the foreground was taken during my trip and it had a similar perspective to my current composition, so I decided to just lay it in. After cutting up sections and transforming each side to fit the perspective I wanted, it was ready to paint over. I also added some trash elements on the shores to further the underlying message of the piece. ►



- An image of a small boat is laid into composition together with trash on the shores and prepared for the paint over stage

05



- Some background photographic details were added as place holders to paint over on the next stage

As for the background, I added some textures and images of architectural and mechanical elements to add detail and show scale, which helps with perspective. The little wooden platform on the right is meant to serve as a guide for the eye returning the viewer's gaze to the center of the image, curving the view towards the figure, similar to the small boat and large ship.

“Creating this piece was definitely a challenging one as it was sort of outside my comfort zone”

Finishing

Here is where I started painting over the textures and images to unify them as one image. I realized that the back part of the small boat was too small to fit the person, so I enlarged and fixed the perspective to solve that problem.

I reduced the contrast on that boat as the overall image was looking very patchy with bright areas

everywhere. I did the same thing with the cargo ship at the back, reducing contrast and lightening it up to push back the perspective. I felt like the cargo ship was too stiff as it was in a full profile view, so I changed up the angles a little to show a slight three quarter view to create more depth and interest.

The atmospheric perspective was then exaggerated to create the gloomy feeling that I was going after, adding fog to almost every element such as the foreground platform to the small boat. I also added some wooden stilts off on the left side of the composition to not only create more depth, but to stop the viewer's eyes from drifting out from the bottom-left corner.

Adding some minor details of ropes and a sense of gravity affected elements on the small boat by increasing its sense of placement in the scene.

Move outside the comfort zone

Finally, I added some distant factory structures

to have something in the background as it was looking too empty, and it helped with the story as well. The images were taken from cgtextures.com.

The figure was then painted in holding an empty net while gazing upon the entire scene hopefully, offering something a little more powerful and memorable to the viewers. Creating this piece was definitely a challenging one as it was sort of outside my comfort zone.

I very rarely paint images that have a really deep emotional message, so it was a tricky one to handle, but I learned a lot from this process and understood how audiences generally associate themselves more with an image if it has a message of 'love' as it is something everyone can relate to.

I will definitely try to incorporate more emotional elements in my future paintings. Thanks a lot of checking out my process, I hope you got something useful out of this! ●



● I painted over of the photographic elements to unify the image as a whole and added more atmosphere to create a better sense of mood

The Artist



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